



12<sup>th</sup> March 2024

## Press Release: International Cyber Censorship Day 2024

**Some governments use cyber censorship to suppress the right to freedom of speech.**



Cyber Censorship is an emergent issue that is evident to this day. Cyber Censorship can be identified as the control or suppression of what can be accessed, published, or viewed online. It can be practised in different forms by governments, organisations, or even individuals who try to restrict access to content, especially on the Internet. Until now, governments still practice cyber censorship; some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, practice cyber censorship regarding

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religion, as many websites or content that is considered offensive to the Islamic region is removed. Countries like China and Iran ban access to social media and practice high censorship policies to detect and block any information regarding the regime<sup>1</sup>. In some ways, Cyber Censorship is being used to allow the internet to be a safer platform for children, reduce racism, or reduce radical ideologies; however, currently, cyber censorship has taken a darker turn as governments use it as a tool to suppress individuals and rights of freedom of speech.

In research done by the Freedom House 2023, the top 10 countries with the worst internet Censorship were China, Myanmar, Iran, Cuba, Vietnam, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Ethiopia, and lastly, Egypt. These countries typically block websites and apps that can lead to political change or Western propaganda. Chinese internet censors are known to monitor what individuals say and post, and many countries on the list above practice the same methods. This raises the alarming idea of an invasion of privacy and violating the fundamental human rights amendments of freedom of speech. Common reasons why governments would invoke such measures are Fear of criticism towards governments, accessing information that could inspire people to act out against the

<sup>1</sup> Vojinovic, I. (2023, May 6). Internet Censorship: Definition, Types, & How It Can Affect You. *Sirisha*. <https://dataprot.net/articles/what-is-internet-censorship/>

Government, or even using the internet to coordinate events such as the Arab Spring Revolution<sup>2</sup>.

Interestingly, research conducted by Cherry & Michigan Engineering (2020) has shown that cyber censorship is increasingly spreading in world democracies such as Norway, Japan, Italy, India, and Poland. However, it was not as aggressive as China's policies on its citizens. Yet, it is essential to shed light on all sorts of censorship and critically analyse the root or the reason for it. In June 2019, Poland experienced a series of protests, and coincidentally, there was a spike in censorship regarding social media websites and Human Rights Watch streams. Similarly, in Japan, when the G20 Summit occurred in 2019, citizens experienced censorship with a few networks. This research concluded that when there is a high-importance political event, social unrest, or new laws, there is a spike or an increasing trend with cyber censorship<sup>3</sup>.

Adding on the above, in the current genocide that Palestinians are facing, there has been much news and evidence of Cyber Censorship that is being practised not only by complicit countries but also by social media organisations such as Meta. Many users of Instagram have been reporting that they are either shadow-banned on their stories or cannot share their posts because they get automatically deleted. Even authors, activists, journalists, and filmmakers were automatically hidden or even had their content deleted if they mentioned Palestine within their content. This is not a phenomenon that was only seen on social media. Also, the Western government tried to censor and apply propaganda when dealing with this genocide<sup>4</sup>. Palestinians and other world citizens are concerned, as these violations are clear and direct restrictions on their freedom of expression, access to information, freedom of assembly, and political participation.

**Broken Chalk announces it to the public with due respect.**

Signed by

**Broken Chalk**

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<sup>2</sup> World Population Review. (2024). Countries That Censor The Internet 2024. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-that-censor-the-internet>

<sup>3</sup> Cherry, G. & Michigan Engineering. (2020). "Extremely Aggressive" Internet Censorship Spreads in the World's Democracies. <https://news.umich.edu/extremely-aggressive-internet-censorship-spreads-in-the-worlds-democracies/>

<sup>4</sup> Shankar, P., Dixit, P., & Siddiqui, U. (2023, October 27). Are social media giants censoring pro-Palestine voices amid Israel's war? *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/10/24/shadowbanning-are-social-media-giants-censoring-pro-palestine-voices>