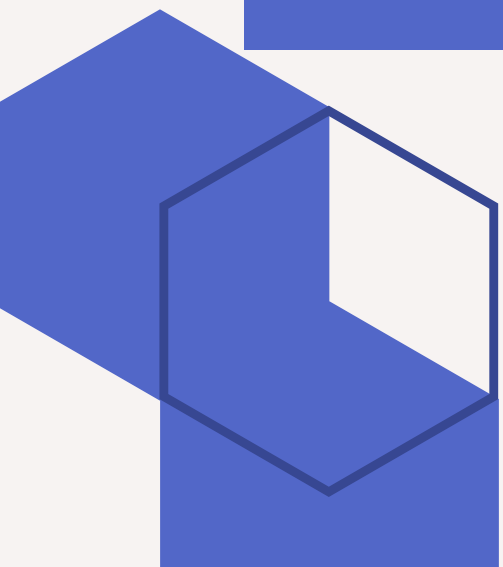


The Internet as a Tool for Surveillance and Shrinking Civic Space: ICANN's Role in Safeguarding an Open Internet

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Objective of Presentation

- **Examine how internet infrastructure is misused for surveillance & censorship**
- **Highlight ICANN's role in mitigating these risks**
- **Propose ways to safeguard digital rights & civic space**

Why This Matters

- 60%+ of world's population live under heavy online restrictions
- Growing use of DNS manipulation, shutdowns, WHOIS data misuse
- Politically motivated domain takedowns silencing dissent
- Undermines trust, privacy, and open Internet values





Global Trends

Surveillance

Tracking Via
WHOIS/ RDAP data

Censorship

Domain suspensions
& takedowns

Shutdowns

Blocking access during
protests/elections

Targeted Repression

Journalists, activists,
marginalized groups
affected

ICANN's Role

Governs key Internet infrastructure: DNS, WHOIS/RDAP, DNS security protocols

Technical mandate, but foundational to human rights outcomes

Efforts so far: WHOIS reform (GDPR), RDAP, DNS Abuse Reporting (DAAR)



Gaps in Current Efforts

- Limited integration of human rights considerations
- DAAR is underutilized for tracking state-linked abuse
- Privacy protections incomplete
- Civil society engagement remains underpowered





Why ICANN Must Act

- Guardian of core Internet infrastructure
- Neutrality ≠ inaction- silence enables misuse
- Trust in the Internet depends on proactive, rights-conscious governance

Recommendations for Action

- **Strengthen Privacy** – Accelerate RDAP rollout, support encrypted DNS (DoH/DoT)
- **Enhance DAAR** – Monitor/report state censorship & surveillance patterns
- **Empower civil society** – Support ALAC, partner with digital rights groups
- **Increase transparency** – Annual reports on state-linked domain abuse





Call to Action

- Recognize ICANN's unique position in safeguarding digital rights
- Collaborate across governments, registrars, civil society & technical experts
- Commit to policies that keep the Internet open, inclusive & rights-respecting



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