

Just Net Coalition – High Level Policy Statement, WSIS Forum 2015
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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for coming here and allowing me to communicate a few words to you.

I would not have been able to do this via the Internet.

When I say that I would not have been able to do this via the Internet, I am not talking about any difficulty with putting these words in digital form, nor is there a problem with the capabilities of the Internet for transporting such data.

Rather, I am talking about the social aspect. There is something that must happen before communication can take place. Before I can communicate to anyone, I must somehow gain their attention in a way that is acceptable to them. This is a key social aspect of communication.

In recent years, a kind of government has been established for the Internet which controls much of this social aspects. Google, Facebook and Twitter are ministries of this government. Unfortunately, this World Government of the Social is not a democratic government. It is not accountable to any parliament. No, this World Government of the Social is accountable only to the almighty dollar.

Like most of the citizens of the world, you and I have never been asked whether we agree to accept Google, Facebook and Twitter to form a government that rules the social aspect of communication.

In fact I hope that you will join me in being very unwilling to accept this undemocratic World Government of the Social.

A few months ago at the World Social Forum in Tunis, the Just Net Coalition joined with other civil society groups and individual participants in a workshop named “Organising an Internet Social Forum – A Call to Occupy the Internet”. This has led to a joint declaration of our commitment to *a common goal of building a people's Internet from below and beyond borders: an Internet that works in the public interest and solidarity, where control is in the hands of people; an Internet based on human dignity, equality, social justice, freedom and people's communication rights.*

We are alarmed to see how both our private and public spaces are being co-opted and controlled for private gain; how private corporations are carving the public Internet into walled spaces; how our personal data is being manipulated and proprietised; how a global surveillance society is emerging, with little or no privacy; how information on the Internet is being arbitrarily censored, and people's right to communicate curtailed; and, how the Internet is being militarised. Meanwhile, decision-making on public policy matters relating to the Internet remains dangerously removed from the mechanisms of democratic governance.¹

Another Internet is possible!

I close with a request: If you agree, please let us know. I fear that if this crucial social contact is not initiated now, the opportunity to be in communication with each other might otherwise be lost.

1 The text in italics is from the Tunis Call for a People's Internet, http://internetsocialforum.net/?q=Tunis_Call_for_a_Peoples_Internet