

Global Policy Weekly - May 10, 2013

by [Emily Barabas](#) [1]
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CDT's Global Policy Weekly highlights the latest Internet policy developments and proposals from around the world, compiled by CDT's [Global Internet Freedom Project](#) [2].

FREE EXPRESSION

Syria [experienced a 19-hour Internet blackout](#) [3] that activists and critics attribute to the Assad regime. Local media reported that an optical cable failure caused the outage, but technical experts doubt such an incident could be the source of the shutdown. In November 2012, the country experienced a similar blackout that lasted for three days. The Electronic Frontier Foundation [highlights](#) [4] the importance of the Internet during the Syrian conflict, "While heavily censored, monitored, and compromised, the Internet has served as an important window connecting the world at large to Syria, and one way that international observers could connect with individuals on the ground in that country."

Proposed libel reform in the UK [received final passage](#) [5] and became law in late April. Under the new law, defendants can respond to a defamation claim by saying that a statement is true fact or honest opinion. The law also limits the practice of "libel tourism," whereby plaintiffs from around the world bring their claims in the UK because of favorable laws there, whether or not there was a strong claim to UK jurisdiction. CDT provided [a brief overview the law](#) [6], noting some concerns about provisions related to intermediary liability and their implications for the protection of anonymity online.

Visa and Mastercard's partner in Iceland has been [ordered](#) [7] by Iceland's Supreme Court to process payments for WikiLeaks. The company, called Validator, had previously refused to process transactions on behalf of the group and its data-hosting service provider, DataCell. In its ruling, the court called Validator's termination of its service to Wikileaks "baseless." Reporters Without Borders [welcomed the ruling](#) [8] and called for other companies to take action: "We urge all the other the financial service companies that have been directly or indirectly involved in blocking payments to WikiLeaks to comply with the logic of Iceland's supreme court ruling without waiting to be legally forced to do so. The financial censorship resulting from these unilateral decisions must be lifted."

Independent media sources in Malaysia [reported](#) [9] that their websites experienced cyber attacks in the period leading up to Sunday's national election. The media outlets report that Internet users have had limited ability to access their content as a result of the attacks. The government denies any involvement. Human Rights Watch [denounced violence and cyber attacks](#) [10] related to the election and Access [worked with local partners](#) [11] to provide an analysis of the network interference.

Guatemalan newspaper El Periódico and Fundación MEPI [reported](#) [12] that its website experienced a cyber attack immediately after the publication posted a story on government corruption involving the nation's president and vice president. Some readers were unable to reach the site for several days and others reported that their computers became infected with a virus when they attempted to access the website. According to the publisher, the site has faced a string of attacks, each closely following the publication of articles about government corruption. The precise source of the attacks is not yet known.

SECURITY AND SURVEILLANCE

The Dutch government [introduced proposed legislation](#) [13] that would give law enforcement new powers to investigate crime online. The draft bill would reportedly allow law enforcement to access email, delete files, and even install spyware. They would also be able to access servers in other countries under certain circumstances. Although approval from a judge would be required in all cases, digital rights group Bits of Freedom [criticized the law](#) [14], warning that other governments may use the Dutch precedent to justify more intrusive surveillance activities.

INTERNET NEUTRALITY

Deutsche Telekom [announced that it will begin introducing data limits](#) [15] on landline connections, reducing broadband speed when users reach monthly caps. Services provided by Deutsche Telekom and its content partners will be exempt from the plan. Critics warn that by giving preferential treatment to services like T-Entertain and Spotify, Telekom and its partners will have an unfair competitive advantage. Advocates and government officials are closely watching the Telekom case as a [broader debate about net neutrality](#) [16] regulation unfolds in the European Union.

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<https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2013/05/syrian-internet-goes-dark-leaving-questions-and-uncertainty-0>

[5] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/law/2013/apr/23/lords-pass-defamation-bill?INTCMP=SRCH>

[6] <https://www.cdt.org/blogs/andrew-mcdiarmid/0805uk-libel-law-gets-much-needed-update-%E2%80%93-also-threatens-online-anonymity>

[7] <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2013-04-24/iceland-s-top-court-orders-valitor-to-process-wiki-leaks-payments>

[8] <http://en.rsf.org/iceland-court-orders-visa-subcontractor-to-26-04-2013,44440.html>

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<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/04/us-malayasia-election-online-idUSBRE94302I20130504>

[10] <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/01/malaysia-violence-cyber-attacks-threaten-elections>

[11] <https://www.accessnow.org/blog/2013/05/02/tracking-network-interference-malaysia>

[12] <http://uncut.indexoncensorship.org/2013/04/guatemalan-newspaper-faces-cyber-attacks-after-exposing-corruption/>

[13] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-22384145>

[14] <https://www.bof.nl/2013/05/02/dutch-hacking-proposal-puts-citizens-at-risk/>

[15] <http://www.spiegel.de/international/business/government-wary-of-telekom-limits-on-flat-rate-dsl-access-a-896435.html>

[16] <http://www.edri.org/node/3281>