

Global Policy Weekly - May 21, 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

Azerbaijan's parliament [voted in favor of proposed legislation](#) [3] to make libel or “abuse” committed online a criminal offense. Under the proposed law, slander is punishable by fines, up to six months imprisonment, or up to one year of “corrective labor.” Opponents to the bill, including [Committee to Project Journalists](#) [4], [Index on Censorship](#) [5], [Reporters Without Borders](#) [6] and International Press Institute [are urging Azerbaijan's president](#) [7] to veto the proposed legislation. Vice Speaker of Parliament Ziyafat Asgarov reported to lawmakers that the society is “not ready for” decriminalizing defamation.

Australia's Communications Minister [announced](#) [8] that the country's financial regulator had begun requesting that Internet service providers block websites that may be providing fraudulent financial opportunities. The statement followed an incident last month in which the regulator appears to have accidentally blocked more than 1,000 legitimate sites, including the [Melbourne Free University](#) [9], that shared an IP address with the target. (Overblocking of this sort is all too common with IP-blocking.) Other government agencies had previously denied involvement in the inadvertent block, which was carried out through a vague provision of Australian telecom law that requires carriers to assist authorities in enforcing criminal law. EFF [blogged about the incident](#) [10] when it first happened, condemning the block as an act of censorship.

SECURITY AND SURVEILLANCE

Saudi Arabian telecommunications company Mobily [appears to be working on technology](#) [11] to intercept mobile application data and communications, with a focus on WhatsApp, Twitter, Viber, and Line. In a recent blog post, security expert Moxie Marlinspike revealed that the company contacted him with an invitation to work on the project. In the course of an email exchange, the Mobily representative identified the source of project requirement as “the regulator.” Marlinspike interpreted this to mean that the government is sponsoring Mobily's project, although there is no official confirmation that this is the case.

CDT joined a coalition of NGOs in a group letter calling for [the investigation of intrusion and remote monitoring equipment](#) [12] discovered on an ISP's network in Pakistan. Researchers at Citizen Lab [identified a FinFisher/FinSpy command-and-control server](#) [13] on a network operated by Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTLD). The Citizen Lab findings indicate that either Pakistan's government is sending out FinFisher trojans or another government is using these tools from inside Pakistan. The letter urges an investigation and reminds Pakistan of its commitment to shelve plans for a nationwide filtering system, calling the use of FinSpy a similar threat to free expression and privacy.

The annual [Queen's Speech](#) [14] in the UK included [discussion of proposals](#) [15] to protect “the public and the investigation of crime in cyberspace.” The primary focus of the Queen's comments was “the problem of matching Internet protocol addresses” to individuals. While the speech did not include mention of the Communications Data Bill – controversial legislation introduced in 2012 that would require Internet companies to retain user data for one year – [Index on Censorship noted](#) [16]

that the speech background briefing language closely resembled the Deputy Prime Minister's comments about the bill when it was introduced last year.

INTERMEDIARY LIABILITY

A federal court in Germany overturned two previous court decisions and [ruled that Google must remove terms from its autocomplete feature](#) [17] if the company receives reports of offensive or defamatory word combinations. The court said that Google does not need to proactively remove all potentially offensive terms, which are produced by an algorithm based on how frequently word combinations are used. The case began when a German businessman complained that Google's autocomplete proposed the words "fraud" and "Scientology" in association with his name. In a statement to Bloomberg News, a [Google spokesman said](#) [18] that holding Google liable for user generated terms is "incomprehensible."

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

The [World Telecommunication Policy Forum \(WTPF\)](#) [19] took place last week in Geneva with CDT's Matthew Shears and Emma Llansó [reporting back](#) [20] from the event. The WTPF adopted [six non-binding opinions](#) [21] on a range of topics that included the role of Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) in increasing connectivity in developing countries, the IPv6 transition, and supporting multistakeholderism in Internet governance. These opinions had been developed through the Informal Experts Group (IEG) process, which brought together ITU Members and non-member experts to debate these topics in three meetings over the previous year. Member States adopted the six opinions forwarded by the IEG with minimal changes. At the conclusion of the event, a range of civil society members and organizations, including CDT, joined together in [a final statement](#) [22] to the WTPF emphasizing the need for all future conversations on these important topics to include full and equal participation from all stakeholders.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The Burmese government is opening its telecommunications sector to foreign investors and planning to give two companies nationwide licenses by the end of June. In a [new report](#) [23], Human Rights Watch warns that Burma has yet to implement strong human rights reforms and companies entering the country must adopt measures to ensure adequate protection of rights. "Reforming Telecommunications in Burma: Human Rights and Responsible Investment in Mobile and the Internet" describes methods for promoting responsible investments and measures that can protect Internet and mobile phone users in Burma.

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[8] <http://delimiter.com.au/2013/05/15/interpol-filter-scope-creep-asic-ordering-unilateral-website-blocks/>

[9] <http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/4694252.html>

[10] <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2013/04/australian-networks-censor-community-education-site>

[11] <http://www.thoughtcrime.org/blog/saudi-surveillance>

[12] <http://www.indexoncensorship.org/2013/05/global-coalition-of-ngos-call-to-investigate-and-disable-finfishers-espionage-equipment-in-pakistan/>

[13] <https://citizenlab.org/2013/04/for-their-eyes-only-2/>

[14] <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm83/8359/8359.pdf>

[15] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-22449209>

[16] <http://blog.indexoncensorship.org/2013/05/08/the-queens-speech-and-free-speech/>

[17] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-22529357>

[18] <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-05-14/google-loses-german-case-over-autocomplete-function.html>

[19] <http://www.itu.int/en/wtpf-13/Pages/default.aspx>

[20] <https://www.cdt.org/blogs/emma-llanso/1705wtpf-successful-outcome-many-questions-remain>

[21] <http://www.itu.int/md/S13-WTPF13-C-0016/en>

[22] <https://www.cdt.org/blogs/1705civil-society-wraps-wtpf-unified-voice>

[23] <http://www.hrw.org/node/115488>