

Global Policy Weekly - July 16, 2013

by [Emily Barabas](#) [1]
July 16, 2013



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

Gambia's National Assembly [passed a bill](#) [3] that would ban "Internet activism" and online distribution of "false news" about the government. The proposed law, which amends the country's Information and Communication Act, would include severe penalties, including up to 15 years in prison. [Article 19 warned](#) [4] that the law attempts to stifle dissent and violates free expression rights of the Gambian people. Reporters without Borders [also raised alarm about the legislation](#) [5]: "The authorities are using these amendments to target news providers and crack down on the Internet, one of the last spaces for freedom of information in Gambia."

Burma's lower house [passed the Printing and Publishing Enterprise Law](#) [6], draft legislation written by the Ministry of Information that would uphold tight government control over the media. Under the bill, the government would retain authority to license newspapers, online news outlets, and foreign press agencies. The law would also tightly restrict obscenity and incitement of public disorder. Reporters Without Borders [urged Burma's upper house](#) [7] to vote against the Ministry of Information's bill, saying that its provisions are contrary to the national press council's recommendations.

Philippine Senator Nancy Binay [introduced a new bill](#) [8] to combat online harassment that critics are calling overly broad and potentially harmful to free speech. The Electronic Violence Against Women Act (E-VAW) seeks to protect victims of "electronic violence," a term defined as any "act involving the exploitation of data" that may cause psychological or emotional distress. Under the proposed law, victims of electronic violence can ask courts or village councils to order blocking, blacklisting, or shut down of an application or program causing such distress. Global Voices Advocacy [warns that the the bill](#) [9], as written, could be used to censor legitimate speech.

SECURITY AND SURVEILLANCE

The Civil Liberties Committee of the European Parliament [agreed on a plan](#) [10] to investigate alleged surveillance activities by the United States and countries in the European Union. The Committee will hold a series of hearings with a diverse set of stakeholders, including representatives from governments, NGOs, and the private sector. Committee MEPs will meet with US authorities and commission studies on the topic of surveillance. A report with conclusions and recommendations will be released by the end of 2013.

Nigeria has [stopped blocking mobile phone service](#) [11] in the state of Adamawa, but continues service shutdown in neighboring Yobe and Borno. The army [cut off service in May](#) [12] after declaring a state of emergency due to attacks by the Boko Haram militant group. The army reported that service shutdowns prevented militants from planning attacks. A local official reported that the shutdown also prevented civilians from calling for help when a school was set on fire during a recent attack. 22 students were killed.

The Indian government and Blackberry [have reached an agreement](#) [13] regarding surveillance of commercial Blackberry users, according to Department of Telecommunications document leaked to

the Times of India. Under the arrangement, Indian law enforcement will be able to monitor email, the status of Blackberry Messenger messages, and websites a user has visited. It appears that the government is no longer attempting to gain access to Blackberry's corporate email service. According to the leaked document, the interception system is "ready to use."

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France suspended "three strikes" provisions in the national anti-piracy law. The law, called "HADOPI" (the High Authority for the Diffusion of Works and the Protection of Rights on the Internet), originally gave courts the authority to suspend Internet access for users after three acts of copyright infringement. Courts only used the power in a single case against man who illegally downloaded music from the Internet. The "three strikes" punishment was replaced with a series of automated fines.

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[4] <http://www.article19.org/resources.php/resource/37152/en/the-gambia--new-internet-law-further-s-government-crackdown-on-free-expression>

[5] <http://en.rsf.org/gambia-internet-users-targeted-by-changes-05-07-2013,44899.html>

[6] <http://www.indexoncensorship.org/2013/07/burmas-lower-house-passes-restrictive-press-law/>

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[8] <http://www.rappler.com/nation/32870-electronic-violence-women-bill-amendments>

[9] <http://advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/2013/07/10/philippine-online-harassment-bill-could-threat-en-speech/>

[10] <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/pressroom/content/20130708IPR16833/html/Civil-Liberties-Committee-MEPs-agree-on-surveillance-inquiry's-next-steps>

[11] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-23283747>

[12] <http://blogs.aljazeera.com/blog/africa/nigerias-mobile-phone-blackout>

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