

# Ethics of Internet Freedom Promotion

Welcome to the World of Human Rights:  
Please Make Yourself Uncomfortable

Henry Corrigan-Gibbs and Bryan Ford  
Yale University

# Internet Freedom

## Internet freedom tools

- Censorship circumvention
- Online anonymity
- Anti-surveillance

# An analogy

## **Humanitarian aid**

groups provide

**food,  
shelter,  
medical care,**

to people in conflict zones, in economic poverty, or living under repressive governments.

→ Lots of soul-searching about ethics of aid

## **Internet freedom**

groups provide

**uncensored Internet,  
online anonymity**

to people in conflict zones, in information poverty, or living under repressive governments.

→ ???

# Open Internet as Human Right

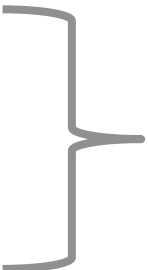
“Everyone has the right to [...] food, clothing, housing and medical care”

- UDHR (Article 25)

“Everyone has the right to [...] seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”

- UDHR (Article 19)

# Ethics of human rights promotion

- Impartiality
  - Impact
  - Consent
  - Cultural norms
  - ...
- 
- In the paper

# Impartiality

Impartiality demands giving food, shelter, medical care to those on “both sides” of a conflict

→ Giving supplies to both sides can:

- sustain a conflict
- lead to outcome that is worse for HRs

Should Internet freedom organizations give support to “both sides” in a conflict? Pick sides?

If orgs do pick sides, what is the basis for their decision?

# Impact

Measuring impact is important for donors and for self-evaluation.

Orgs often pick metrics that are easy to measure:

- # of bags of food distributed
- \$ spent

→ These metrics don't measure *hunger, health, or effectiveness*

How should Internet freedom organizations measure impact?

What does a positive “Internet freedom” outcome look like?

more users ≠ internet freedom

# Conclusion

- Internet freedom orgs can draw ethical lessons from human rights orgs
- Places to start:
  - *Journal of Ethics and International Affairs*
  - *Ethical Questions and International NGOs*
  - [www.spherehandbook.org](http://www.spherehandbook.org)