



FARISMUN TOPIC GUIDE

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Meet the Chairs:

Karim Qawasmi

Greetings! On behalf of the SPECPOL committee I send my warmest welcomes; my name is Karim Qawasmi, I'm an FIS senior & I will be your FARISMUN SPECPOL chair for this year. My sole purpose for this conference is to provide for our delegates, alongside my co-chair, an experience that will stand out as both an academically challenging one, and an ever-lasting enjoyable memory. If however, this is your first time participating in an MUN, I promise the only regret you'll have by the end of the conference is not signing up earlier. :) see you soon!

Raghad Abu Ayshih

Welcome fellow delegates to FARISMUN'20. I'd like to begin by expressing my warmest welcomes to each and every one of you. My name is Raghad Abu Ayshih, I'm a senior in SIS and I am beyond eager to announce that I will be chairing this committee. I am thrilled to have you be a part of SPECPOL and impatient to get to know everyone. Hopefully, my co-chair and I will exert our maximum efforts to be of aid to everyone in this committee and ensure that each of you has a fascinating experience. I can't wait to see what this conference holds for us. I wish you all the best of luck and promise you a great time!



Committee Introduction

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee, commonly referred to as the fourth committee, is the newest addition to the standing General Assembly committees. The current SPECPOL committee is a merge between two former committees, the Decolonization Committee & the Special Political Committee. The earlier committee, the Special Political Committee, was formed after WWII to de-escalate the worrying friction between the newly formed Zionist state, Israel, and Palestine. The latter committee, The Decolonization Committee, was originally supposed to serve the purpose of eradicating modern colonialism; In its peak, the Decolonization Committee has overseen the decolonization of over eighty countries, and has recognized 15 self-governing state. The SPECPOL committee today cannot directly intervene with military action or infringe a country's sovereignty, therefore, today it only acts as a counseling unit that makes suggestions & recommendations to the Security Council on decolonization issues.

Topic Introduction

In summer of 2016, the United Nations Human Rights Council released a non-binding resolution condemning intentional disruption of internet access by governments. The resolution reaffirmed that "the same rights people have offline must also be protected online". This implies that internet access is a continuation to the fundamental right of freedom of speech, however one could argue that such a "human right" alongside online anonymity pose as a threat to national security; is such an argument an excuse for the iron grip, or a legitimate concern? If online freedom of speech is a fundamental human right, to what extent is it? Thirdly, are limits by national governments an infringement of this right or a justifiable measure? Lastly, is it ethical for a governing force to oversee online activity or is it perhaps an invasion of one's privacy? Those are the fundamental philosophical questions that our topic is rooted within and perhaps a viable approach to this sensitive matter.

Topic History

Internet censorship occurs in response to or in anticipation of events such as elections, protests, and riots. An example is the increased censorship due to the events of the Arab Spring. Other types of censorship include the use of copyrights, defamation, harassment, and obscene material claims as a way to suppress content. The internet as we know it was born in 1991, when the World Wide Web, a network of documents linked through hypertext technology, first became



open to members of the general public. Ever since then, the internet has seen landmark efforts to spread information, as well as landmark efforts to defeat that spread:

1995 – Researchers with the U.S. Navy start developing onion routing, a method for obscuring the source and destination of internet traffic using a network of nodes that encrypt data packets, creating onion-like layers of anonymity. Their research forms the basis of the Tor browser.

1996 – The U.S. enacts the Communications Decency Act, which prohibits posting “indecent” or “patently offensive” material on the internet. While much of the CDA is struck down as unconstitutional, section 230, which limits the liability of internet providers, social media platforms, and other intermediaries for illegal content their users share or access, remains.

1998 – The U.S. passes the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, which criminalizes the dissemination of technology meant to overcome copyright protections. The DMCA has been subject to criticism from free speech advocates ever since, who argue it restricts scientific research, legitimate technological innovation, free expression, the fair use of copyright materials, and other online activities and discourses.

1998 – China’s Ministry of Public Security launches the “Golden Shield” initiative to limit citizens’ access to material seen as disruptive to country leadership. The Golden Shield grows into the “Great Firewall of China,” one of the world’s most comprehensive internet censorship programs.

1999 – Specifications for the first “Virtual Private Network” (VPN) are published online. VPNs allow users to access private networks across public networks. VPNs became popular not only for companies sharing private services and data with satellite offices and workers but with individual users evading geo-restrictions and internet censorship.

2008 – Satoshi Nakamoto publishes a paper outlining “Bitcoin,” a decentralized “peer-to-peer electronic cash system.” The block chain concept described is censorship-resistant thanks to its reliance on a network of distributed ledgers. Years later, the same block chain technology that enables bitcoin leads to the creation of censorship-fighting tools such as Justin Tabb’s Substratum.

2011 – The Mubarak regime shuts down all internet in Egypt in an attempt to limit information flow regarding “Arab Spring” protests and news reporting. Afterward, similar country-wide internet blackouts occur soon in Libya and Syria.



2015 – Following a 2014 court decision that struck down much of the 2010 Open Internet Order, the FCC approves a Net Neutrality order that designates ISPs “Common Carriers” and forbids discriminatory blocking or throttling. The new order survives a 2016 court challenge.

2017 – The FCC repealed its earlier net neutrality order.

2017 – China “hardens” its Great Firewall by cracking down on VPN services. Once a go-to tool for students, researchers, businesspeople, and activists for surpassing the Great Firewall, VPNs have become significantly more difficult to use.

Topic Discussion

The right to internet access, also known as the right to broadband or freedom to connect, is the view that all people must be able to access the internet in order to exercise their online rights such as, but not limited to: freedom of speech, and freedom of expression. The dictionary definition of the right to internet access also entails the governmental responsibility of ensure that Internet access is broadly available, and that governmental agencies may not unreasonably restrict an individual's access to the Internet.

The right to Internet access is closely linked to the right of freedom of speech; the right to internet access can also be seen as a fundamental continuation to freedom speech.

The Internet, or the World Wide Web, is generally seen as a medium for the distribution of intellectual property; a medium that is arguably outside of any country's jurisdiction. Intellectual property, such as online content, encompasses everything from publicly available information to confidential government documents. To some governing regimes, this broad definition of the term "intellectual property" has been interpreted as a threat to national security - leading to many censoring or cutting Internet service in times of crisis. In contrast, other forms of censorship have also been internationally exhibited; for instance, some governing regimes have interpreted the protection of intellectual property as a national duty, and thus placing censorship measures that attempt to prevent cases of abuse to the freedom of expression. In democratic countries, freedom of speech and expression play a great role within society as they are recognized as a human right, as is stated in the UDHR and the ICCPR. However, given that this right is very ‘sensitive’ and can be defined very subjectively, democratic countries generally enforce legislation to overcome exploitation of this right. For example, in the United States, the constitution (see major parties involved) prohibits the creation of laws that abridge freedom of speech and expression. The Communications Decency Act (CDA) of 1996 was an attempt to control pornography on the Internet as this topic is deemed by many as inappropriate.



There are also those countries that maintain and strongly regulate content through a variety of methods of censorship. This can be seen in China, where the ‘Great Firewall’ is an encompassing and highly technological system of censorship which makes use of various developments in technology to provide a highly censored Internet environment to the population. In this country, there is little adherence to the human right of freedom of speech and expression. In Islamic countries, for example Iran, censorship is also highly used. In these countries, it is used in particular for the purpose of political censorship, in order to prevent defamation and sedition which could lead to revolt. These are only a few examples; however they clearly demonstrate the immensely differing views on what is considered to be inappropriate content on the Internet, and the levels to which censorship is put into practice worldwide. In our conference, we will be discussing internet censorship by national governments with respect to your assigned country and the possible conflicts the censorship on the Internet may inflict.

Key Terms

1. **Moral censorship:** This is the censorship of materials which can be considered vulgar, inappropriate or morally questionable. Common examples of this are (child) pornography and pedophilia.
2. **Political censorship:** This type of censorship consists of concealing or falsifying information received by citizens, with the objective of preventing discordance with governmental/ political ideas.
3. **Religious censorship:** This entails the use of censorship in order to suppress opinions and ideas opposing those of conventional beliefs.
4. **Military censorship:** Any type of censorship conducted by those employed in the armed forces, generally in order to prevent the spread of classified information.
5. **Corporate censorship:** This is a censorship conducted by corporations, where threats are held against those with important information, in order to prevent them from spreading it.
6. **Totalitarian regime:** A centralized governmental rule in which there is only one political party that holds absolute authority and control
7. **Democracy:** This is a governmental system with a constitution that supports and upholds human rights and fair elections.
8. **Communism:** This is a governmental system in which private ownership does not exist. In theory, there are no social classes in this system, however in reality there are generally two classes; a ruling and a working class. The social and economic activities are controlled by a single political party.



9. **Free speech:** Free speech is the human and political right to speak and communicate ideas and opinions without limitation. This is established as a human right in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The boundaries of free speech are not absolutely defined, and are dependent on legislation.
10. **Hate speech:** This is speech which attacks or threatens one or more individuals of a certain race, gender, religion, sexual orientation etc. Similar to free speech, the boundaries of hate speech are not clearly defined, and are subject to legislation. This is a frequently debated topic, which bears a controversial question: how can we determine whether statements commonly classified as hate speech should be permissible due to the fact that there is a human right to free speech and opinions?
11. **Defamation:** This is the act of falsely representing or communicating words or actions with the intention of damaging/degrading a person's reputation. This is relevant in particular when considering hate speech through means of the Internet, as it can be used to sway the opinions of others about a particular person/group of people.
12. **Circumvention:** In the context of Internet censorship, circumvention refers to the use of technology to bypass filtering in order to access and view censored information and content. All the various methods of doing so involve accessing a server which is unfiltered and is not subject to censorship laws. As circumvention is a very technically challenging process, it is not a very common issue and therefore censorship still remains as an effective method of withholding information.
13. **Filtering by keyword:** This type of censorship works by censoring information containing specified words/phrases which are deemed inappropriate.
14. **Web 2.0:** Web 2.0 refers to a generation of the World Wide Web (WWW) which allows for user generated content. Examples of applications of Web 2.0 are blogs, YouTube, wikis and forums.

Key Questions

1. Do national governments have the justifiable right to censor internet content?
2. Does the lack of internet censorship pose as a threat to national security?
3. Is online freedom of speech a fundamental human right?