

Collaborating on Telecommunications and Human Rights

by Susan Morgan
March 12, 2013

Information and communications technology (ICT) companies—from search engines and software providers to network operators and equipment vendors—enable access to information and the exchange of ideas around the world. But the more we depend on technology in every part of our lives, the more that company business decisions can impact human rights, particularly free expression and privacy.

Governments have legitimate national security and law enforcement responsibilities that require assistance from technology companies, from fighting terrorism to protecting children online. But when governments, whether in pursuit of legitimate objectives or not, seek to remove content, restrict network access, or request users' personal information, it puts companies in a difficult situation. Dramatic Internet shutdowns have captured worldwide public attention, but are just one part of a complex challenge.

The [Global Network Initiative](#) [1] brings together ICT companies with human rights and press freedom organizations, investors, and academics to address these challenges with a framework rooted in universal human rights standards. Since GNI was formed, the human rights implications of the telecoms sector have entered the global spotlight.

In response to these concerns, a group of global telecommunications operators and vendors have been meeting since 2011 to discuss freedom of expression and privacy rights and the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) [2]. Today we are excited to announce a two-year collaboration with eight companies who currently belong to the Telecommunications Industry Dialogue: Alcatel -Lucent, France Telecom-Orange, Millicom, Nokia Siemens Networks, Telefonica, Telenor, TeliaSonera, and Vodafone. GNI will house the work of the Industry Dialogue, providing a platform to exchange best practice, learning, and the further development of due diligence tools. We will help them engage with a wide array of interested groups on the Guiding Principles on telecommunications and freedom of expression and privacy they have developed.

During the two years of collaboration, the members of the Industry Dialogue are not joining GNI. But we do aim to establish a common approach to freedom of expression and privacy rights. GNI's vision is the creation of a global corporate responsibility benchmark for freedom of expression and privacy in the ICT sector. We hope this is a step in that direction.

-
- [GNI](#)

The copyright © 2013 by Center for Democracy & Technology. CDT can be freely copied and used as long as you make no substantive changes and clearly give us credit. [Details](#).

Source URL: <https://www.cdt.org/blogs/1203collaborating-telecommunications-and-human-rights-0>

Links:

[1] <http://globalnetworkinitiative.org>

[2] <http://www.business-humanrights.org/media/documents/ruggie/ruggie-guiding-principles-21-mar-2011.pdf>

