

TECHNOLOGY

A Double-Edged Sword

Promoting Freedom, Crushing Dissent

Over the past decade, the digital world has become an increasingly important arena for promoting and protecting human rights. The Internet, texting, and social media allow people to expose abuse, organize, and mobilize as never before—especially in repressive countries.

But just as technology can be a tool for freedom, it can also be used to crush dissent. Authoritarian governments use digital tools to spy on citizens, harass defenders, censor information, and manipulate the truth. In the worst cases, governments target advocates and bloggers, subjecting them to torture, jail, and even murder for their online activities. Some governments have tried to pull the plug on the digital world entirely – shutting down the Internet and mobile networks so activists cannot connect with each other or be heard by the outside world.

Advocates have shown remarkable ingenuity in finding ways around these restrictions, making it clear that the digital world will play a significant role in human rights activities for years to come.

PRIVACY versus SECURITY

Leaks of classified government documents in 2013 revealed that the US government had been engaging in widespread surveillance of American citizens' mobile and Internet use. Such surveillance, government officials claim, is essential to keeping Americans safe. Others believe that collecting massive amounts of data on people without their knowledge is illegal.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
Are you willing to sacrifice your privacy to help the government keep America safe?
But what if the government also discovered sensitive details about your medical issues, immigration status, or sex life? What if this data was later used against you?
Do you think the government should inform people about its data collection methods?
But what if revealing these methods made surveillance less effective against security threats?

THE GREAT FIREWALL



A number of countries try to censor what citizens can see on the Internet, among them Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria, Bahrain, and Tunisia. In China, however, authorities have established the most elaborate system for digital content control in the world. One researcher called China's online censorship "the largest selective suppression of human communication in the history of the world." Websites related to pro-democracy activists, human rights groups, Tiananmen Square, Taiwan, foreign news reports, and the Dalai Lama are among the types of sites blocked or redirected by the Chinese government.

What's
Behind the
Great Firewall
of China



ADVOCATES promote rights with **DIGITAL TOOLS**

Facebook Revolution Egypt

In 2010, Wael Ghonim, a marketing executive in his twenties, was checking out Facebook when he came across a photo of the bloodied face of Khaled Said, a young man who had been beaten to death by police in Egypt.

Moved to take action, Ghonim created a Facebook page called "We Are All Khaled Said." Two minutes later, 300 people had joined his page. Within three months he had more than 250,000 "friends."

With this simple act, Ghonim joined an energetic group of technology-savvy young Egyptians who were using blogs, texts, and websites to organize and circulate pro-democracy messages. In a country that controlled and restricted speech and dissent, Egyptians had found a way to avoid the censors, and start a revolution.

Desperate to undermine the growing protests, Egyptian authorities shut down all digital communications on January 27, 2011. Little did President Hosni Mubarak know how this would in fact help mobilize the demonstrators. Unable to communicate electronically, advocates and their families flooded into Tahrir Square in Cairo, and stayed for days. Under pressure from the protests, Mubarak resigned.



Wael Ghonim, Egyptian activist

Blogger Released After Outcry Cuba

Yoani Sánchez, Cuba's most well-known dissident journalist and blogger, was driving to cover a trial about the murder of another dissident when she and her husband were pulled over and taken into custody. The police accused the couple of trying "to start a provocation and a media show to harm the proper conduct of a trial."

After news agencies broadcast word of her arrest, human rights groups condemned the move. Public outcry made the difference, Sánchez said. Once police returned her cell phone and released the couple from custody, Sánchez tweeted: "We have been freed! Thank you to all of those who raised their voices and their tweets, and allowed us to go home."



Yoani Sánchez, Cuban blogger

Twitter Revolution Iran



After the Iranian presidential election in 2009, protestors took to the streets under the banner of the "Green Movement," claiming the vote was rigged.

The crackdown by authorities was immediate and severe. Using text and Twitter to evade government censors, demonstrators were able to show the world real-time photos and videos of the violence they experienced. They also used digital tools to organize and mobilize Iranian citizens.

For the first time ever, the world was able to see what was really happening in Iran, making the Green Movement's protest the first major human rights event broadcast via social media. While the protests were ultimately crushed, the visual evidence showed that activists were organizing and operating in a coordinated manner.

THE GREAT FIREWALL



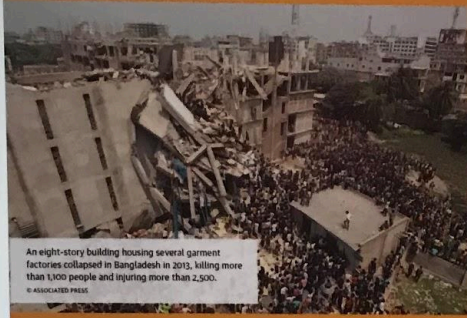
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What's Behind the Great Firewall of China



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An eight-story building housing several garment factories collapsed in Bangladesh in 2013, killing more than 1,100 people and injuring more than 2,500.
© ASSOCIATED PRESS

Unsafe factories endanger workers

Today, most clothing and shoes are manufactured in factories far away from where they are sold—in places like China, Vietnam, India, and Bangladesh. Global companies with popular brands do not own or operate these factories and, all too often, they take little responsibility for how the workers in these factories are treated.

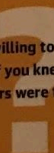
Most of the workers in overseas clothing and shoe factories are young women who face risks from dangerous machinery, fires, unsafe buildings, and exposure to toxic chemicals. In 2013, a building housing several clothing factories collapsed in Bangladesh, killing more than 1,100 workers.

Consumer complaints have been a major force for reform—especially among college students who have demanded that their schools put their logos only on clothes that come from factories where owners pay attention to the rights of their workers.

Some leading companies now require that factories producing their goods respect labor laws and permit independent inspections of their facilities. If factory owners do not comply, some of these companies are taking their business elsewhere. But this creates a dilemma: when companies leave a country, so do jobs.

Long-term change will depend on whether enough consumers are willing to pay a bit more for their clothes and shoes to ensure they come from factories where worker rights are respected.

Would you be willing to pay more for your clothes or shoes if you knew it could guarantee that workers were treated fairly?





Demand for palm oil forces people from their land

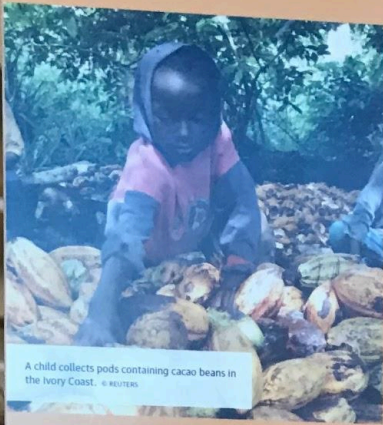
Palm oil is used in roughly half of all packaged foods—such as cookies, donuts, and breakfast cereal—as well as in fast food, detergents, air fresheners, lipstick, and other cosmetics.

To meet increasing global demand for these goods, companies are clearing hundreds of thousands of acres of forests to make way for palm oil plantations in places such as Indonesia and Cameroon. When lands are cleared, local people are often evicted through intimidation or threats of violence. While some groups of indigenous people have successfully sued palm oil companies and reclaimed their lands, others who have protested land clearings have been tortured—and even killed.

One problem for consumers seeking to avoid palm oil is that this ingredient can be listed by a variety of names, making it hard to know which products contain it. Current laws prevent food manufacturers from listing palm oil as simply vegetable oil, but the ingredient can also be called palmitate, sodium dodecyl sulphate, hydrated palm glycerides, and dozens of other names.

Consumer campaigns have had a significant impact on protecting the rights of indigenous people by persuading packaged goods companies and fast food chains to certify that the palm oil used in their products did not cause human rights violations, to use alternatives to palm oil, or to make sure palm oil is clearly listed as an ingredient so consumers can avoid it if they wish.

**Would you be willing to only purchase products
that contain sustainable palm oil?
What steps would you need to take to make
this happen?**



A child collects pods containing cacao beans in the Ivory Coast. © REUTERS

Chocolate is no treat for children on cacao plantations

Cacao beans are the main ingredient in chocolate—and roughly 75 percent of these beans come from plantations in West Africa, where all too often young children, especially boys, are forced to work.

Child workers on cacao plantations are exposed to toxic pesticides and dawn-to-dark workdays for little pay, if they are paid at all. Some of these children are slaves, sold into servitude by human traffickers or their families.

Chocolate is part of a \$75 billion global industry. Some human rights organizations have urged the biggest players in the sector to certify that their products do not contain cacao from plantations using slave or child labor. Some companies have complied, largely because of citizen pressure, but many more have been reluctant to do so.

You can join a range of human rights campaigns making a real difference by urging companies to guarantee that no children were abused in the production of their goods. And you can take up the cause as an individual, starting immediately: the next time you buy candy, ask the owner of your local newsstand or candy store to display and sell fair-trade chocolate that is certified as produced without child and slave labor.

Would you ask companies that make your favorite chocolate to certify that their products do not contain cacao from plantations using child and slave labor?



what is your **ETHICAL FOOTPRINT?**

Human rights issues are all around us—in our closets, kitchens, and even in our pockets—though sometimes they are hard to see.

Many people now regularly think about their "environmental footprint"—how their actions and consumer choices affect the planet.

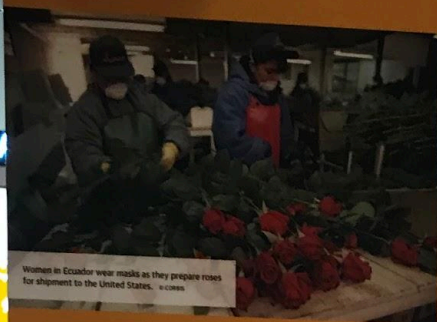
Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person ... Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

More and more, people are also thinking about their "ethical footprint"—how their choices and actions affect other people. Increasingly, consumers want to know where their electronics, toys, treats, and food come from—

and if anyone's rights were violated in the process of producing these items.

Each of the everyday items in this gallery has a human rights story to tell, based on how it was made—and presents choices for individuals seeking to respect human rights through their purchases.



Women in Ecuador wear masks as they prepare roses for shipment to the United States. © CNN

Women who pick and cut flowers risk their health

Workers in the cut-flower industry face dangers year round, but demand for flowers at specific times of the year—like Mother's Day and Valentine's Day—increases workers' exposure to the toxic pesticides needed to grow perfect, pest-free flowers.

Most of the cut flowers produced in Ecuador and Colombia are exported to the United States, where they are sold in florist shops, supermarkets, and online. There are 40,000 flower workers in Ecuador and more than 100,000 in Colombia.

For these workers, who are mostly women, exposure to pesticides causes severe health problems—including skin rashes, respiratory problems, and miscarriages. In Colombia, doctors in flower-producing regions report up to five acute-poisoning cases per day, and a study by the Colombian National Institute of Health found an elevated rate of miscarriages and premature births among flower workers.

You can make a difference in the lives of the women who pick and cut the flowers you buy. As a start, you can commit to buying flowers that are fair-trade certified. But you can make an even bigger difference by joining with others in campaigns that urge supermarket chains, local and national florist chains, and online retailers to use their mass purchasing power. These major retailers can let the owners of flower farms know that their consumers are demanding flowers from places that protect workers' health.

Would you join a campaign to ask local florists
to sell fair-trade flowers?
Would you be willing to organize such a
campaign?

what is your ETHICAL FOOTPRINT

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The world loves soccer, but what about fair play?

Many soccer balls are produced in Pakistan, where children work from home to sew by hand the white and black panels on soccer balls. Young workers often sit hunched over for hours at a time, and can pierce their fingers with sharp needles or slice their hands on the wax-coated string used to stitch the panels together.

Adding insult to injury, if children are at home sewing, they are not going to school, making it impossible for them to escape poverty.

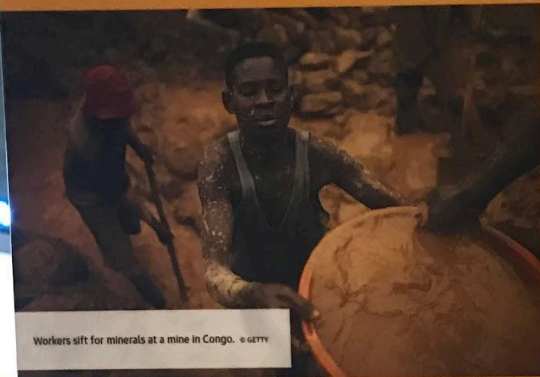
After a major human rights campaign exposed widespread abuse of child stitchers in Pakistan, soccer ball manufacturers joined together, built sewing centers, and monitored the centers to ensure that children were not employed there. While many of these factories are now more closely monitored, further efforts are needed to eradicate child labor in the production of soccer balls, not only in Pakistan but also in China and India, where production has increased.

Companies bear a significant responsibility to uphold bans on child labor and ensure the rights, health, and safety of adult stitchers. Consumer demand is essential. Schools, soccer leagues, and individuals can reach out to soccer ball manufacturers urging them to make protecting children's and workers' rights a goal for the sport.

Would you contact soccer ball companies to ask them how they guarantee their products are not made using child labor?

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Workers sift for minerals at a mine in Congo. © Getty

Minerals used in electronics often fuel violence

The minerals used inside cell phones, music players, computers, and other electronics—primarily tin, tantalum, and tungsten—are mined in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is plagued by devastating conflict.

Armed groups in Eastern Congo control the mines and sell millions of dollars' worth of these minerals each year to buy weapons, which they use in brutal campaigns of violence. Armed groups also enslave children to work in mines using rape and other forms of violence to intimidate and control surrounding communities.

Because mineral mining is often shrouded in secrecy, consumers often have no way of knowing if the raw materials in their electronics helped to finance armed groups.

A law passed by the US Congress in 2010 requires public companies to outline the steps they are taking to ensure that the minerals in their supply chain do not benefit warlords in the Congo. Consumers can add their voices by joining campaigns to ask electronics companies to investigate and verify that their goods are "conflict free," which means that minerals sold to underwrite violence are not used in their products.

Student groups, in particular, are making a positive difference by asking their schools, school districts or universities—which make large purchases of electronics—to let electronics manufacturers know that consumers do not want to buy brands that bankroll violence.

**Would you pay more for a cell phone if it was
guaranteed to be "conflict free?"
Would you be willing to pay \$5 more?
How about \$50 more?**



RIGHT BLACK GLOVE, RAISED FIST:
BLACK POWER

LEFT BLACK GLOVE:
BLACK UNITY

BLACK SCARF:
BLACK PRIDE

OCHR
BUTTON

BLACK SOCKS:
BLACK POVERTY

1968 OLYMPICS Civil Rights Are Human Rights


On October 16, 1968 at the Olympic Games in Mexico City, American sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos shook the world when they used their victories in the 200 meter dash to protest the denial of civil rights to African Americans in the United States. Smith, who ran a world record time of 19.83 seconds to win gold, and Carlos, who finished third to take the bronze, were members of the Olympic Committee for Human Rights (OCHR), and had planned to take advantage of the moment should the opportunity present itself. Standing atop the podium to receive their medals, they lifted their clenched fists in protest as the Star Spangled Banner played. Almost immediately, a collective gasp could be heard throughout the stadium. Silver medalist, Australian Peter George Norman, stood on the podium with them and wore an OCHR button in support. Broadcast around the world, their gesture was met with derision by some while others saw it as an act in solidarity with those fighting for equality, justice, and human rights.

UNZIPPED TRACK SUIT:
SOLIDARITY WITH AMERICAN
BLUE COLLAR WORKERS

BEADED NECKLACE:
IN MEMORY OF THOSE LYNCHED OR KILLED



SEARCH



The Chinese government prevents access to topics it deems threatening.

Tibet

Egypt

The Korean War

Human Rights in China

Policies on ethnic minorities

Government criticism



GREAT FIREWALL



Does China restrict Internet access?



LOADING

Tactics range from making pages load slowly to severing or disrupting Internet connections to pulling the plug on the Internet entirely.



WHAT are the rights?

There's a list of 30 "articles"

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights contains 30 carefully crafted articles, each explaining a human right. Here are the rights, summarized by category, in plain language.

CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

A person cannot be:

- Discriminated against because of gender, skin color, religious beliefs, or any fundamental characteristic of who they are
- Tortured or mistreated
- Held in prison without a reason
- Enslaved
- Condemned as a criminal without a fair opportunity to present his or her case in a court

A person must be able to:

- Live in freedom and safety
- Be protected by laws
- Vote in fair elections
- Think and speak freely
- Enjoy personal privacy
- Choose a mate and have a family
- Own property
- Move to a different place
- Flee government persecution
- Meet with others without government interference

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

A person must have the opportunity to:

- Seek gainful employment
- Have adequate food and shelter
- Get a decent education
- Have access to medical care