General Assembly

MetroWest Model United Nations 2020

Government Controlled Blackouts

I. Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

　　Welcome to our first annual Metrowest Model United Nations Conference! My name is Jewel Pauly and I am a junior at the Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter School, and your chair for the General Assembly on government controlled blackouts. This committee will focus mainly on how these blackouts are primarily used to promote censorship and degrade peaceful anti-government organizations and protests. Delegates should focus on how to deal with governments who encourage the suppression of people's voices in countries, and how to promote the use of internet activism when called for. I encourage delegates to think about the many different factors that play into this issue as well.

　　Although there are distinct groups of countries with drastically opposing views on this subject, I expect delegates to work together to build bridges, not walls, and encourage cooperation and compromise being made among you all. Please don't hesitate to ask me any questions on parliamentary procedure or position papers via my email, jpauly2021@student.amsacs.org. Please make sure you email your position papers to me by February 7, 2020 if you wish to be considered for an award.

　　　　I am thrilled to see you all in February, and hope you all have a wonderful experience at our conference. Good luck!

Jewel Pauly

Chair of the General Assembly on Government Controlled Blackouts

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Award Criteria

Delegates are expected to act cordially and diplomatically to the problem at hand.

Participation in moderated/unmoderated caucuses, as well as resulting resolutions is highly

encouraged. The opinions of the Chair and Director will play an important role in selecting those

who receive awards (Verbal Commendation, Honorable Mention, Outstanding Delegate, Best

Delegate). Please be respectful and considerate of the different opinions at hand. If you are a

beginner in Model UN, do not worry! Please consider taking risks and participate in debate even

if you are scared at first! We would much rather appreciate a shaky, impromptu speech rather

than a solidly prepared one read off a paper. Model UN is meant to be fun and adventurous so

please step out of your comfort zone and delve into the wonderful world of debate!

II. Background on Government Controlled Blackouts and the Rise of Internet Activism

There is no doubt that technology has almost completely taken over our lives. From sending a

simple email to being a part of the largest activist groups in the world, technology and social

media have allowed us to take action against injustices, and spread the word extremely quickly

compared to years before. With the rapid growth of the technological age and the rise of internet

activism, recently many countries have resorted to the implementation of government controlled

blackouts to prevent people from standing up for their rights in the face of anti-government

protests. Before, the world wasn't nearly as dependent on the internet as it is today. Thanks to the

internet, the world has made many advancements, and without it, businesses, governments, and

organizations wouldn't thrive nearly as much as it does with the social connections and networking opportunities it provides; not to mention its use as a major source of media globally.

According to the organization RESET, internet activism, or digital activism, is defined as the use of "digital tools (internet, mobile phones, social media, etc.)...[to bring] about social and/or political change." With the vast resources available to us through the internet, thousands of people have used the internet as a means of communication and organization to make their voices heard when faced with difficult political or social situations. This tactic used to share knowledge and bring about positive change in the world has dramatically increased recently, and many governments in different countries have noticed this. As a result, some governments have decided to implement the use of controlled blackouts as a means of silencing dissent, and increasing censorship by cutting off many media sources in the process.

III. Undergoing Conflicts

By cutting people off from the internet, there is no way for people to spread the word of the issues going on in their countries, decreasing the knowledge available to others through social media and other means of communication. This has an impact on not only other people in foreign countries who can potentially help improve a specific country's situation, but also the families of people within the country who won't be able to communicate with these blackouts. In addition, people are also cut off from international news sources, therefore increasing the amount of censorship with the reduction of outside sources. The impact of this has been seen in

Sudan and India, both as early as last year, with blackouts in India even going into this year as well as a way to suppress civil unrest. Organizations such as #KeepItOn are working to help prevent more of the government controlled blackout strategy from being implemented in other countries as the world progresses through the age of technology.

Communication:

Communication is key in order for any organization to be productive, and with the lack of internet during government controlled blackouts it disrupts the flow of work in hospitals, schools, businesses, and organizations. Lack of communication in a country can largely impact NGOs, and humanitarian organizations trying to help countries in turmoil.

Healthcare Systems:

The disruption of work flow caused by blackouts makes it extremely difficult for hospitals to do their jobs of providing the best possible care while being accurate to what each patient needs based on their unique personal backgrounds. The internet has been extremely useful in terms of maintaining the organization of confidential files on many patients, as well as being consistent with the planning of patient care. With the lack of internet, hospital record management is unable to be maintained, preventing those in the medical profession from being able to give their patients proper treatment, therefore risking the lives of many people.

Education:

The internet is a very useful tool to help younger generations grow and thrive with a good education, and with it cut off, it contributes to the lack of available up to date information to learn from. In recent years, the use of the internet for education has dramatically increased, and with sudden government blackouts, it provides a challenge for educators to avoid any disruptions in it, considering that many assignments are now done online in many countries.

Economic Factors Involved:

According to the researchers of Top10VPN, in 2019 alone, 18,225 hours of government controlled internet shutdowns globally had a total economic cost of about 8.05 billion dollars. With the lack of flowing information and communication disruptions, many businesses struggled without the internet to support them. There were more shutdowns seen in 2019, with economic costs rising 235% from 2016; these blackouts mostly occurring in response to anti-government protests with the government trying to control the flow of information available to people in these countries (Top10VPN). Due to the lack of internet, communication between different branches of companies and between customers was severed, costing many businesses a large amount of revenue.

IV. Bloc Positions

To note: these blocs should not be used as each government's hard position. Many countries fall somewhere in between and have nuanced policies. Please do your own research to see where your country stands.

Countries Against Regulating Government Blackouts:

China, Iran, Sudan, Russia, Ethiopia, Hong Kong, Somalia, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Belarus, Iran, Myanmar, Venezuela, Brazil, Egypt, Estonia, Rwanda, Turkey, Algeria, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Lebanon, Philippines, Indonesia, Peru, Morocco

Countries For Regulating Government Blackouts:

United States, United Kingdom, India, Ukraine, Japan, Switzerland, Germany, Netherlands, France, Canada, South Korea, Iceland, Australia, Belgium, Spain, Nigeria, Italy, Argentina, Israel, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso

V. Questions to Consider

1. Should internet availability be considered a part of freedom of expression?

2. How much should internet activism be considered a priority in countries trying to tackle political oppression?

3. Should internet access be deemed a human right?

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