



Internet Shutdowns in Africa Workshop

This workshop aims to encourage in-depth and productive conversations about the rise of Internet shutdowns on the continent. It is organized by the Department of Journalism, Film and Television at the University of Johannesburg's School of Communication, the ERC-funded ConflictNet programme at the University of Oxford's Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy, the CSLS, and the Bonaverro Institute for Human Rights. The workshop comes at a critical moment. There has been a dramatic increase in Internet shutdowns in Africa. In 2016, the number of shutdowns doubled from the previous year, affecting citizens in 11 countries on the continent. And while the number of shutdowns declined slightly in 2017, governments that resorted to disrupting the Internet did so more frequently and for longer periods of time. From anti-government protests in Cameroon, to exam cheating in Ethiopia, concerns of election related violence in Uganda, and quelling social unrest in Zimbabwe, the justifications are diverse.

There is a pressing need for more in-depth research into the whys and hows governments are choosing to curtail Internet access. In particular more research is urgently needed to answer questions around motivations, the legal and political processes that enable Internet shutdowns to take place, the technological developments enhancing the ability and willingness for actors to resort to such measures, and the role that international and non-state actors like technology companies, ISPs, and governments are playing in this process. This event will explore some of these issues, with a strong focus on elections.

The event will be held at the JoziHub (<http://jozihub.org>), an incubator for supporting startup tech projects in South Africa. The JoziHub is located at 44 Stanley Ave, Milpark, Johannesburg.

Thursday, June 7

9.15 Registration

9.30- 9.45 Introductions

9.45-10.15 Rethinking Internet shutdowns

Nicole Stremmler, University of Oxford and University of Johannesburg

10.15-11.15 Elections

Legal, policy and technical forms of information controls: An analysis of Internet shutdowns and the electoral process

Robert Muthuri, Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology, Strathmore Law School, Kenya

Internet shutdown as a tool for managing electoral processes and political movements

Daniel Berhane, Horn Affairs, Ethiopia

Chair and discussant: Wambui Wamunyu, Media and Film Studies, Daystar University, Kenya

11.15-11.30 Coffee/Tea

11.30-12.30 Elections (continued)

Restrictions on access to the Internet in Burundi in 2015

Jean Paul Nkurunziza, Internet Society, Burundi

Elections, fake news and Internet monitoring in Kenya

Anne Muchiri & Cecilia Nanfuka, Computer Science Department, University of St. Paul's, Limuru, Kenya

Chair and discussant: Anri van der Spuy, Research ICT Africa, Cape Town, South Africa

12.30-2.00 Lunch break

2.00-3.00 Elections (continued)

Facebook, Internet shutdowns and elections

Emilar Gandhi, Facebook South Africa

Methods for identifying online hate speech on Facebook around elections

Iginio Gagliardone, University of Witwatersrand

*Chair and discussant: Admire Mare, Department of Communication,
Namibia University of Science and Technology*

3.00- 3.15 Coffee/tea

3.15-5.00 Internet shutdowns in conflict

Closures and conflict in somalia

Abdihakim Ainte, iRise Hub, Somalia

Internet shutdown and insecurity in South Sudan

*Kenyi Yasin Abdallah, Executive Director, The Advocates for Human Rights and
Democracy, South Sudan*

Zimbabwe social media protests and Internet shutdowns

Shepherd Mpofu, Communication Studies, University of Limpopo

Internet breaks: causes, manifestations and representations in North-West and
South-West Cameroon

Martial Abega Eloundou, Catholic University of Central Africa, Cameroon

Chair and discussant: Sarah Chumbu, University of Johannesburg

6:30 Group Dinner

Friday, June 8th

9.30 -11.00 Legal justifications for Internet shutdowns

Freedom of expression, and the Internet shutdown in Ethiopia: A question of accountability

Yohannes Eneyew Ayalew, School of Law, Samara University, Ethiopia

Of tractors, demos, coups and Internet blackouts: An exploration into Zimbabwe's recent Internet shutdown

Chris Mhike, Atherstone & Cook Legal Practitioners, Zimbabwe

Litigating against Internet shutdowns in Africa: Lessons from Uganda

Paul Kimumwe, Journalism and Communication, Makerere University, Uganda & Dorothy Mukasa, Unwanted Witness, Uganda

Chair and discussant: Vincenzo Cavallo, Cultural Video Foundation, Nairobi

11.00-11.15 Tea Break

11.15-12.30 The political economy of Internet shutdowns

Evolution of approaches to estimating the economic impact of Internet shutdowns in Africa

Wairagala Wakabi, CIPESA, Uganda

Local ISPs' responses and reactions to government take down orders: Case of Zimbabwe

Admire Mare, Department of Journalism, Media, Technology, Namibia University of Science and Technology

Chair and discussant: Daniel Berhane, Horn Affairs, Ethiopia

12.30-2.00 Lunch

2.00-3.30 Debating Closures: Alternatives to shutdowns

Fine, switch off the signals: Digital discourse among Kenyans on a post-poll TV shutdown

Wambui Wamunyu, Media and Film Studies, Daystar University, Kenya

Internet shutdowns in Africa: Empirical findings and national narratives

Vincenzo Cavallo, Cultural Video Foundation, Nairobi, Kenya

Online media in Morocco, between regulation and political control

Abdellatif Bensfia, Institute of Information and Communication, Rabat, Morocco &

Renaud de la Brosse, Department of Journalism, Linnaeus University, Sweden

Chair and Discussant: Eleanor Marchant, University of Oxford

3.30-3.45 Tea break

3.45-5.00 Publications and way forward