

August 2013

FOC Joint Statement on The Socialist Republic of Vietnam's Decree 72

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The Freedom Online Coalition is a cross-regional group of 21 governments that collaborate to advance Internet freedom worldwide. The Coalition provides a forum for like-minded governments to coordinate efforts and work with civil society and the private sector to support the ability of individuals to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms online.

The Freedom Online Coalition is deeply concerned by the announcement of Vietnam's new Decree 72, which will impose further restrictions on the way the Internet is accessed and used in Vietnam when it comes into effect September 1. For example, Decree 72 restricts online information flow, and limits the sharing of certain types of news and other speech. Decree 72 appears to be inconsistent with Vietnam's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as its commitments under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Decree 72 risks harming Vietnam's economy by constraining the development of businesses in Vietnam, limiting innovation, and deterring foreign investment. An open and free Internet is a necessity for a fully functioning modern economy; regulations such as Decree 72 that limit openness and freedom deprive innovators and businesses of the full set of tools required to compete in today's global economy.

The Freedom Online Coalition notes that resolution 20/8, adopted by consensus by the UN Human Rights Council in July 2012, confirms that human rights apply online as well as offline. The Freedom Online Coalition calls on the Vietnamese government to revise Decree 72 so that it promotes the ability of individuals to exercise their human rights, including the right to freedom of expression.

The Freedom Online Coalition was formed at a conference hosted by the government of the Netherlands in 2011, and held further meetings hosted by Kenya in 2012, and Tunisia in 2013. The government of Estonia, chair of the Coalition, will host the next conference in spring 2014.

Freedom Online Coalition Background

The Freedom Online Coalition is a cross-regional group of 21 governments that collaborate to advance Internet freedom worldwide. The Coalition provides a forum for like-minded governments to coordinate efforts and work with civil society and the private sector to support the ability of individuals to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms online.

The mission and vision of the Freedom Online Coalition are founded upon the notion that human rights apply online as well as offline, as confirmed in resolution 20/8, adopted by consensus by the UN Human Rights Council in July 2012.

The FOC seeks to identify best practices regarding the application of human rights in the evolving online landscape, as well as to call attention to conditions that undermine those rights.

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