       Proposal for research on human rights protocol considerations
                   draft-doria-hrpc-proposal-00

Abstract

   Work has been done on privacy issues that should be considered when
   creating an Internet protocol. This draft suggests that similar
   considerations may apply for other human rights such as freedom of
   expression or freedom of association. A proposal is made for
   initiating IRTF work researching the possible connections between
   human rights and Internet standards and protocols. The goal would be
   to create an informational RFC concerning human rights protocol
   considerations.

   Discussion on this draft at: hrpc@article19.io

Status of This Memo

   This Internet-Draft is submitted in full conformance with the
   provisions of BCP 78 and BCP 79.

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1. Introduction

The recognition that human rights have a role in Internet policies is
slowly becoming part of the general discourse. Several reports from
former United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the promotion and
protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Frank
La Rue, have made such relation explicit, which lead to the approval
of the landmark resolution "on the promotion, protection and
enjoyment of human rights on the Internet" [HRC2012] at the UN Human
Rights Council (HRC). And, more recently, to the resolution "The
right to privacy in the digital age" [UNGA2013] at the UN General
Assembly. The NETmundial outcome document [NETmundial] affirms that
human rights, as reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human
Rights [UDHR], should underpin Internet governance principles.
Nevertheless, the direct relation between Internet Standards and
human rights is still something to be explored and more clearly
evidenced.

Concerns for freedom of expression and association were a strong part
of the world-view of the community involved in developing the first
Internet protocols. Apparently, by intention or by coincidence, the
Internet was designed with freedom and openness of communications as
core values. But as the scale and the industrialization of the
Internet has grown greatly, the influence of such world-views started
to compete with other values. The belief of the authors is that as
the Internet continues to grow, the linkage of Internet protocols to
human rights needs to become both structured and intentional.

Standards and protocols form the basis of the human rights enabling
infrastructure of the Internet. It needs to be determined whether
there is a causal relationship between Internet protocols and
standards, and human rights such as freedom of expression. To study
the relationship between the two one would need to carefully consider
structural and architectural considerations, as well as specific
protocols. The Internet Society paper "Human Rights and Internet
Protocols" [HRIP] 'explores human rights and Internet protocols
comparing the processes for their making and the principles by which
they operate and concludes that there are some shared principles
between the two.' Though that paper does not go into possible
reasons, dependencies or guidelines, it initiates the discussion.
More research is needed to map human rights concerns to protocol
elements and to frame possible approaches towards protocols that
satisfy the implications of human rights standards.

To move this debate further, a list has been created for discussion
of this draft: hrpc@article19.io and related ideas - information or
subscriptions at: https://lists.ghserv.net/mailman/listinfo/hrpc

1.1. Requirements Language

As this is an informational document recommending a research effort,
it will not make use of requirements language as defined in RFC 2119
[RFC2119].

2. Research topic

In a manner similar to the work done for RFC 6973 [RFC6973] on
Privacy Consideration Guidelines, the premise of this research is
that some standards and protocols can solidify, enable or threaten
human rights, such as freedom of expression and the right to
association and assembly online. To start addressing the issue, a
mapping exercise analyzing Internet architecture and protocols
features, vis-a-vis possible impact on human rights needs to be
undertaken. The list below represents the first examples of this
exercise.

2.1. Protocol and Standard Examples

   Some initial topics that need exploration are indicated in this
   section. Most of this work has yet to move beyond speculation and
   casual conversation. The next release of the draft will develop
   these discussion further, based on discussion to be held on the
   hrpc@article19.io email list.

2.1.1. Architecture

   RFC 1958 [RFC1958] mentions 'the community believes that the goal
   [of the Internet] is connectivity, the tool is the Internet
   Protocol'. It continues a bit further: 'The current exponential
   growth of the network seems to show that connectivity is its own
   reward, and is more valuable than any individual application such as
   mail or the World-Wide Web.' This marks the intrinsic value of
   connectivity which is facilitated by the Internet, both in its
   principle, and in practice. This shows that the underlying
   principles of the Internet aim to preserve connectivity, which is
   fundamental and similar to the part of article 19 of the Universal
   Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR], which defines a right to receive
   and to impart information.

2.1.2. Transparency

   Another part of article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human
   Rights UDHR [UDHR] mentions that one has the right to hold opinions
   without interference (emphasis added). This same sentiment can be
   found in IAB RFC4924 [RFC4924] - Reflection on Internet Transparency
   where it states: 'A network that does not filter or transform the
   data that it carries may be said to be transparent" or "oblivious" to
   the content of packets. Networks that provide oblivious transport
   enable the deployment of new services without requiring changes to
   the core. It is this flexibility that is perhaps both the Internet's
   most essential characteristic as well as one of the most important
   contributors to its success.'

2.1.3. HTML

   Websites made it extremely easy for individuals to publish their
   ideas, opinions and thoughts. Never before has the world seen an
   infrastructure that made it this easy to share your brainchild with
   such a large group of other people. The HTTP architecture and
   standards, including RFC 7230 [RFC7230], RFC 7231 [RFC7231], RFC 7232
   [RFC7232], RFC 7234 [RFC7234], RFC 7235 [RFC7235], RFC 7236
   [RFC7236], and RFC 7327 [RFC7237], are essential for the publishing
   of information. The HTTP protocol, therefore, forms an crucial
   instrument for freedom of expression, but also to the right to freely

participate in the culture life of the community, to enjoy the arts
and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

2.1.4. Mailing lists

Collaboration and cooperation have been part of the Internet since
its early beginning, one of the instruments of facilitating working
together in groups are mailing lists (as described in RFC 2369
[RFC2919], RFC 2919 [RFC2919], and RFC 6783 [RFC6783]. Mailing lists
are critical instruments and enablers for group communication and
organization, and therefore form early artefacts of the
(standardized) ability of Internet standards to enable the right to
freedom of assembly and association.

2.1.5. IDNs

English has been the lingua franca of the Internet, but for many
Internet user English is not their first language. To have a true
global Internet, one that serves the whole world, it would need to
reflect the languages of these different communities. The
Internationalized Domain Names IDNA2008 (RFC 5890 [RFC5890], RFC 5891
[RFC5891], RFC 5892 [RFC5892], and RFC 5893 [RFC5893]), describes
standards for the use of a broad range of strings and characters
(some also written from right to left). This enables users who use
other characters than the standard LDH ascii typeset to have their
own URLs. This shows the ambition of the Internet community to
reflect the diversity of users and to be in line with Article 2 of
the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which clearly stipulates
that 'everyone is entitles to all rights and freedoms [..], without
distinction of any kind, such as [..] language [..].

3. Proposal

Mapping the relation between human rights and protocols and
architectures is a new research challenge, which will require a good
amount of cross organizational cooperation to develop a consistent
methodology. While the authors of this first draft are involved in
both human rights advocacy and research on Internet technologies - we
believe that bringing this work into the IRTF would facilitate and
improve this work by bringing human rights experts together with the
community of researchers and developers of Internet standards and
technologies.

At this point we have created a mailing list where we would like to
encourage discussion of the issue and capture interest of the IRTF
community. A second step would be to create a charter and ask the
IRTF for a Research group to further develop methodology and
investigate Human rights Protocol considerations.

   Assuming that the research produces useful results, the objective
   would evolve into the creation of a set of recommended considerations
   for the protection of applicable human rights.

4. Acknowledgements

   This builds on work done by RFC 6973 [RFC6973].

   Thanks go to those who have discussed and edited the ideas in this
   draft. Special thanks go to Joy Liddicoat as the co-author of
   Human Rights and Internet Protocols [HRIP]

5. IANA Considerations

   This memo includes no request to IANA.

6. Security Considerations

   As this draft concerns a research proposal, there are no security
   considerations.

7. References

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Appendix A. Additional Stuff

   This is a place holder for an Appendix if it is needed.

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