Freedom of Association and Internet Infrastructure

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Objective: to document forms of association and assembly (including protest) that do not have a negative impact on the Internet infrastructure.
Central question:

How does the Internet architecture enable and/or inhibit freedom of association and assembly?
Assembly & Association

1. Assembly: an intentional and temporary gathering of a collective in a private or public.

2. Association: individuals or entities formally brought together to collectively act, express, promote, pursue or defend something.
Freedom: both rights protect the possibility to join or leave a group of choice.
Is the Internet itself an association...?
IETF is an assembly, even an association [RFC3233]
RFCs would not be possible without freedom of association and assemble, online and offline.

The word "protocol" found its way into the language of computer networking \(\rightarrow\) need for collective agreement among network users.
Cases and examples

A. Free association
   – Peer to peer [P2P]
   – Mailing lists

B. Forced association
   – DDoS
   – ISPs
Which model is better for freedom of assembly and association?

• Centralized
• Decentralized

Why?
Preliminary Conclusions

• Internet has an impact on the ability for people to exercise their right to freedom of association and assembly.
• The Internet itself might be a form of association and assembly, and should be protected as such.
• To get access to the Internet one could argue one is caught in a forced assembly with the access network.
Comments?

Are we missing something?