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DW Global Media Forum

Roundtable talk
Internet Freedom and
Net Neutrality at Stake.
How to defend digital rights?

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BACKGROUND

"Internet freedom is the new press freedom," claims the Nigerian Paradigm Initiative. But in 2017, the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted to roll back net neutrality, marking a victory for the broadband industry. This shows that open networks and non-discrimination against applications or content are at stake, even in democratic states. But there is a ray of hope. In recent years, European activists, journalists, media associations, academics, and start-ups organised a powerful movement to protect net neutrality. In 2016, their lobbying for strong net neutrality protection proved successful — as long as the rules decided on at European level are implemented by national telecom regulators.

In many countries, internet freedom is not only threatened by restrictions to net neutrality. It is also endangered by governments shutting down internet applications or ordering telecom companies to cut off citizens from the internet. Global corporations such as Facebook are either unwilling or unable to oppose authoritarian regimes in defence of internet freedom. In African countries, there is a silver lining as well. Citizens are increasingly fighting digital rights abuses in the courts. People are exploring alternative means of civil action to challenge government and corporate restrictions.

In this session, we will tackle the following questions: How can civil society mobilise to defend digital rights? What do activists' experiences from Europe and Africa have in common? How can internet freedom and net neutrality be preserved around the globe? What can journalists and the media contribute?

Chair

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INPUTS

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INTERACTIVE PLENARY DISCUSSION

END OF SESSION