

APrIGF Summary Report

Track 1a: Plenary 1: The Arabic Revolutions, their Impact on the World, Roles of Social Networks, Lessons for effective but representative Internet Governance for soon arriving Multilingual Internet

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The session was about the Arabic revolutions, their impact on the world, roles of social networks, and lessons for effective and multilingual internet. Originally the plan was to have speakers do presentations and what we tried to do in this session was not to make it into speeches but to try and make it interactive. The plan had invited guests joining us from Lebanon, Beirut, Cairo, from Tunisia, and a couple of other cities, in the Arab world. Basically to address the events that have actually led to the revolutions in the Arabic world and answer some of the questions that are vital to what we are here for.

Some of the questions were how effective was social media in these revolutions and why were they effective in let's say Tunisia and Egypt, but by the time they got to the other regions and the other countries, they stopped being effective. Secondly, how can these lessons be translated or utilised for better internet governance, allowing the local community to have a greater say. Quite clearly, social media has actually played a significant role in expressing and allowing the expression of the interest of these people.

Another question that was raised was how that also changed local politics. We all knew that some of these dictators had been there for decades and they were unmovable. Well, they got moved. How did that change local politics? How did that impact on global politics? We also recognise that, for example, the US government and the G8 have agreed to dedicate new funds to aid the call for freedom and support of these revolutions.

The question that was also asked and debated was is this money going to go to these revolutions and help the calls of these people or is it going to go to the further extenuating circumstances of old regimes, new regimes and then absorbing the revolution. All of this really factor into the format of internet governance.

If we are also asking ourselves that how it relates to what we're doing today, and to the role of ICANN, and the new gTLDs. The surprising things in the event was I asked in this audience for people to raise their hands, how many have heard of ICANN. I got probably like something like 50 per cent of hands raised, maybe the other 50 per cent was still sleeping. What was even more alarming is I asked: how many people have heard of new gTLDs? You could see the glazed look on some of the participants.

That's not really surprising, but when you factor that the new coming multilingual internet is about to arrive, if things move forward, you will not only going to get new gTLD this is ASCII, but in local communities language's. Then when the question was asked from the participants, by the way, I asked the same questions at an event six weeks ago, I was in Kuwait at an Arab media forum, which

most of the satellite channels and news media was participating, also they weren't aware of what's going on.

The question here is would the new gTLDs and the internet coming in multilingual, how does that relate to the policies being governed by still remaining the laws of one government, which is the United States? Then the discussion was about this issue has been there for many years, it has never been properly discussed, so that alternatives can come and serve the local communities in a way that is more decentralised.

All in all, I think it raised more questions about the need to recognise that with the Arabic revolutions and the way they have changed and impacted on world politics, it is, it can be utilised for a better format of internet governance in the space we are trying to occupy and perhaps there are lessons as well in that format, when it comes to the mechanism of governing the internet through the new gTLDs and in local communities language's so that it's not centralised through the laws of one country.