

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Amnesty International launches global campaign against internet repression**

Following the success of the launch of its internet freedom campaign in the UK, Amnesty International is today going global with **irrepressible.info**. The campaign aims to claim back the web as a force for change in the face of an increasing willingness on the part of technology companies to aid censorship and repression.

From Iran to the Maldives and Cuba to Vietnam, governments are both cracking down on those who use the internet to communicate their views and denying their citizens access to its wealth of information. Web users are locked up, internet cafes are shut down, chat rooms are policed and blogs deleted. Websites are blocked, foreign news banned, and search engines filter out sensitive results.

"The internet can be a great tool for the promotion of human rights -- activists can tell the world about abuses in their country at the click of a mouse. People have unprecedented access to information from the widest range of sources," said Amnesty International.

"But the internet's potential for change is being undermined -- by governments unwilling to tolerate this free media outlet, and by companies willing to help them repress free speech."

Sun Microsystems, Nortel Networks, Cisco Systems, Yahoo! and Google are among those companies implicated in helping governments censor the internet or track down individual users. In 2004, Microsoft released information about nuclear whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu to the Israeli authorities without his knowledge or consent. The data was initially used to prosecute Vanunu for having contact with foreign media.

"We are calling on internet users across the world to go to <http://irrepressible.info> and sign a pledge calling on all governments and companies to respect internet freedom," said Amnesty International. "Internet companies often claim to be ethically responsible -- these pledges will highlight how their cooperation in repression risks making them complicit in human rights abuses and damages their credibility."

The online pledges will be collected and presented to a key UN meeting on the future of the internet in November 2006.

To coincide with the launch of the international campaign, Amnesty International is releasing a report about the role of Yahoo!, Microsoft and Google in internet repression in China. The apparatus of internet repression is considered to be more advanced in China than in any other country and companies are particularly willing to cooperate with the Chinese government.

**Notes to editors**

The campaign website can be found in Arabic, English, French and Spanish at <http://irrepressible.info>.

The report, Undermining freedom of expression in China, can be found at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGPOL300262006>

Mordechai Vanunu had been banned from contacting foreign media by the Israeli authorities. This ban, which is itself a violation of human rights, has just been extended for a further year. Though the judge in the ongoing Vanunu trial has now agreed not to use the information supplied by Microsoft, the data is in the hands of the Israeli authorities and could be used to continue to restrict his freedom and harass him further.

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

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