



March 6, 2009

Eric Schmidt, Chief Executive Officer, Google
Carol Bartz, Chief Executive Officer, Yahoo!, Inc.
Steve Ballmer, Chief Executive Officer, Microsoft Corporation

Dear Mr. Schmidt, Ms. Bartz and Mr. Ballmer:

We are writing to you on behalf of Reporters Without Borders and Amnesty International regarding World Day Against Cyber Censorship, on March 12, 2009. As you know, Reporters Without Borders is an international press freedom organization that defends the right to inform and to be informed; Amnesty International is a Nobel prize winning international human rights organization with over 2.2 million members worldwide.

World Day Against Cyber Censorship is a day to advance and celebrate a free Internet as an open window to the world and denounce the attacks made on the free flow of information online. In the spirit of fostering freedom of expression, we are asking that you do not censor any of your search engines or blog platforms anywhere around the world on this day.

Your companies have grown on the concepts of open platforms for interaction, communication, idea development, and exchange. However, these concepts remain merely unfulfilled dreams for millions of people who live in countries where freedom of expression, creativity, and peaceful thought are not respected or protected.

Currently there are more than two dozen countries restricting Internet access on a regular basis. Authoritarian regimes are becoming increasingly efficient at blocking any material they deem "objectionable." Your assistance allows states, such as China, to out-right ban access to information on "human rights", "dalai lama", "Charter 08" or "democracy", as well as to respected human rights websites, including those of Reporters Without Borders and Amnesty International.

Especially after having participated, for months, within a multi-stakeholder initiative with your firms, our organizations understand the challenges of operating in countries that restrict Internet access; these countries are trying to pressure you to obey local laws that do not comport with international law and standards that protect freedom of expression. But complying with local demands that violate international law does not justify your actions.

We urge you, on March 12th, to champion the vision of the Internet as a free space for everyone, regardless of nationality or geographic location, and fulfill the idea of a truly worldwide web-- even if just for one day. This would send a strong message to all "netizens" -- individuals, organizations and states alike -- that censorship online is not the only way forward.

We thank you in advance for considering our request and are available to you should you have any questions or desire to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jean-Francois Julliard".

Jean-Francois Julliard
Secretary-General
Reporters Without Borders

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry Cox".

Larry Cox
Executive Director
Amnesty International USA