



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **New Amnesty International Report Details Role of Yahoo!, Microsoft and Google in Limiting Freedom of Expression in China**

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#### ***Release Marks Launch of New Campaign for Free Speech Online; Site Allows Citizens to Publish Fragments of Censored Material on Their Own Web Pages***

(New York) — Amnesty International (AI) today released a new report, *Undermining Freedom of Expression in China*, exposing how Yahoo!, Microsoft and Google have violated their stated corporate values and policies in pursuit of the potentially lucrative Chinese market. In sync with the report release, the organization unveiled [irrepressible.info](http://irrepressible.info), a new campaign for free speech online that continues Amnesty International's work combating Internet censorship.

"The Internet should promote free speech, not restrict it. We have to guard against the creation of two Internets -- one for expression and one for repression," said Larry Cox, Executive Director of Amnesty International USA (AIUSA). "It's up to citizens worldwide to keep governments and corporations accountable."

*Undermining Freedom of Expression in China* shows how Yahoo!'s, Microsoft's and Google's public statements in support of freedom of expression stand in stark contrast to their collusion with the Chinese authorities:

- Yahoo! wrote, "We believe the Internet is built on openness, from information access to creative expression. We are committed to providing individuals with easy access to information and opportunities to openly communicate and exchange views and opinions."

In China, Yahoo! has handed over private information that led to the imprisonment of two journalists, Shi Tao and Li Zhi, both of whom have been adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience. The company has also voluntarily signed China's "Public Pledge on Self-discipline for the Chinese Internet Industry," agreeing to censor and deny access to information.

- Microsoft maintains that it has "worked hard to make Microsoft a values-driven company that maintains the highest standards of professional conduct, meets or exceeds the ethical and legal expectations of countries where we do business and seeks to enable people throughout the world to realize their full potential."

In China, Microsoft shut down the blog of *New York Times* researcher Zhao Jing at the government's

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request. The company also obeys directions from the Chinese authorities to limit use of certain terms -- like "democracy" and "human rights" -- on MSN Spaces.

- Google Chairman and CEO Eric Schmidt said, "The prize is a world in which every human being starts life with the same access to information, the same opportunities to learn and the same power to communicate. I believe that is worth fighting for."

In China, Google has launched a censored version of its international search engine.

AI calls on the companies to be transparent about their dealings with the Chinese authorities, revealing details of agreements and Web filtering arrangements. AI asks the companies to publicly state their principled opposition to implementing requests that flout human rights standards and to call for the release of "cyber-dissidents." And the organization also calls on companies to exhaust all judicial processes and appeals before complying with government requests with human rights implications, such as providing e-mail account details.

The release of the report marks the launch of AI's new global campaign against Internet censorship, centered on the new Web site <http://irrepressible.info>. The site enables members of the public to fight Internet repression in three main ways:

- Undermining censorship by publishing fragments of repressed material on their own blogs or Web sites. Activists can copy a snippet of code to create a badge that cycles through pieces of censored information on their own Web pages.
- Signing a pledge calling on all governments and companies to respect Internet freedom. A full list of signatures will be presented to a United Nations meeting on the future of the Internet in November 2006.
- Taking online action demanding that Yahoo! work to free Shi Tao, the imprisoned journalist; calling on the Chinese government to release Shi Tao; and urging Microsoft and Google to stop facilitating Chinese human rights abuses. Tens of thousands of AI members have already made their voices heard on these issues.

"Irrepressible.info is an opportunity to take global action to defend free speech online. Internet users around the world can call for the Web to be a tool for communication, not incarceration," said Mila Rosenthal, Director of AIUSA's Business and Human Rights Program.

The release of *Undermining Freedom of Expression in China* and launch of [irrepressible.info](http://irrepressible.info) continue AIUSA's work on combating Internet censorship. Anthony Cruz, AIUSA's Corporate Action Network Coordinator for California, recently addressed both the Google and Yahoo! stockholders' meetings, confronting the management of both companies about their human rights practices face-to-face. In February, AIUSA Advocacy Director for Asia and the Pacific T. Kumar testified at the Congressional Human Rights Caucus Members' Briefing on human rights and the Internet in China.

AIUSA has worked to support the Global Online Freedom Act of 2006, introduced in March by Representative Chris Smith (R-NJ), which aims to protect free and open communication online globally before repressive countries succeed in developing an entirely separate, heavily censored, widely surveilled and restricted version of the Internet.

For more information on Amnesty International's work combating Internet censorship, please see: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/business/censorship.html>

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