

University of Haifa

Faculty of Law

Cyber Challenges to Democracy and Civil Rights

Aviva & Sammy Ofer Observatory, Eshkol Tower, 30th floor.

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The growing threats to cyber security put pressure on governments to undertake a more active role in securing the rule of law. Recent legislative initiatives aim at expanding government authority, tightening control over internet use and increasing surveillance and data retention. The Snowden revelations demonstrated that state monitoring and intervention in online activity is not simply the province of non-democratic regimes but also of liberal democracies.

The comeback of the state as a strategic player in the information environment creates new challenges for civil rights. Over the past two decades, governments and big companies have adjusted their strategies to the digital environment, but the social institutions intended to secure the rule of law and civil rights are yet to be adjusted. For a long time civil liberties have been taken for granted in liberal democracies, as they were reasonably secured by well-established constitutional principles, separation of power and a bill of rights. Recent developments suggest, however, that those checks and balances may no longer be sufficient to secure freedom in the years to come.

The purpose of this conference is to map the growing challenges to civil liberties and explore new strategies to address them. The conference will examine the challenge of pursuing cyber security while ensuring civil rights. As recent developments reveal, the state may be part of the problem, as traditional checks on its powers are less relevant, yet it is also part of the solution, since in the absence of state protection commerce, culture, freedom and access to basic social goods might be at risk. Focusing on the state as a central player, the conference will explore new forms of state agencies, collaboration between government and industry in cyber security, and collaboration between the state and online mega-platforms (such as Google, FB) and the relationship between states.