



Damming a river to catch a fish
Why the DNS must enable expression
– not silence it

ARTICLE19

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How is DNS abuse relevant for FoE?



The DNS is a tool. And how it's wielded matters.

On the one hand, it can be powerful tool for addressing online abuse. On the other, it can censor content, silence critics, and stifle the free flow of information.

Our report looked into incidents where this balance was not maintained.



Why does this matter?



Increasingly, rather than blocking single pages, there is a move to make entire domains inaccessible.

Without clear safeguards and guiding principles, this can be unnecessary, disproportionate, and risk violating our right to speak and to know.



It's like damming a river to catch a fish.

Key Findings

(1) The spectrum of DNS abuse definitions creates systemic vulnerability.

Whether, and how, domain operators define DNS abuse matters.

(2) Registries and registrars operate under growing, often conflicting pressures.

Navigating ICANN contracts, national laws, court orders, law enforcement demands, and their own terms and conditions leads to a lack of clarity.

(3) Registrants' rights often remain an afterthought

There is limited transparency about domain suspension decisions and virtually no appeals mechanisms. Registrants are often unaware that their domains were suspended, much less why or by whom.

Thank you!



Read the report here: <https://www.article19.org/dns-must-enable-expression/>

Any questions? Reach out to michaela.shapiro@article19.org

