

Russia Airs Views on Internet

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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LONDON — Britain rejected calls from China and Russia for greater Internet controls Tuesday at the opening of a major cyberspace conference but was criticized for suggesting curbs on social media after recent riots.

Ministers, tech executives and Internet activists are meeting over two days in London to discuss how to tackle security threats and crime on the Internet without stifling economic opportunities or freedom of speech.

While Western states worry about intellectual property theft and hacking, authoritarian governments are alarmed at the role the Internet and social media played in the protests that swept the Arab world this year.

"Too many states around the world are seeking to go beyond legitimate interference or disagree with us about what constitutes 'legitimate' behavior," Foreign Secretary William Hague told the meeting.

In September, China, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan proposed to the United Nations a global code of conduct including the principle that "policy authority for Internet-related public issues is the sovereign right of states."

An anti-censorship group accused Western governments of double standards, pointing out that Prime Minister David Cameron briefly considered restricting online social networking media after riots swept English cities in August.

"It's very easy to defend this case of black-and-white human rights against dictatorships around the world, but as soon as our own Western-style stability of the state is called into question, then freedom of expression is expendable," John Kampfner, chief executive of Index on Censorship, told the conference.

About 60 countries, including China, Russia and India, were represented at the conference as well as tech industry figures such as Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales, and senior executives from Facebook and Google.

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