

Resolution on U.S. Enterprises' Abridgement of Free Speech

Whereas in recent years there have been multiple high profile incidents¹ of United States enterprises² abridging the free speech rights of people of the United States, apparently to maintain profitable relationships with repressive governments;

Whereas "[The Universal Right to Free Expression: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*](#)" states "the American Library Association opposes any use of governmental prerogative that leads to intimidation of individuals that prevents them from exercising their rights to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas";

Whereas Article 12 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) states "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks";

Whereas Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers";

Whereas there is a distinction between a private platform's deliberate suppression of an individual's opinions and that platform's decision to engage in content moderation to remove hate speech and incitement to violence from an online venue;

Whereas the [United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech](#) defines "hate speech" as "any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor"; and

Whereas the American Library Association is on record as opposing the use of disinformation through its "[Resolution on Access to Accurate Information](#)"; now, therefore, be it:

Resolved, that the American Library Association (ALA), on behalf of its members:

1. reaffirms its commitment to free speech and free expression as previously stated in “The Universal Right to Free Expression: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*”;
2. strongly urges U.S. enterprises that allow for social interaction and comments on online platforms to resist efforts from governments to suppress or restrict the “right to freedom of opinion and expression” as enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
3. urges those same U.S. enterprises to address disinformation, as well as targeted harassment or hate speech, in order to protect the honor, dignity, and humanity of users of their online platforms; and
4. recommends library workers and governing bodies share this resolution with library users and local media.

¹ Allen-Ebrahimian, B. (2020, June 11). Zoom closed account of U.S.-based Chinese activist “to comply with local law”. Axios.com. Retrieved from <https://www.axios.com/zoom-closes-chinese-user-account-tiananmen-square-f218fed1-69af-4bdd-aac4-7eaf67f34084.html>; Bottela, E. (2019 December 4). TikTok Admits It Suppressed Videos by Disabled, Queer, and Fat Creators. Slate.com. Retrieved from <https://slate.com/technology/2019/12/tiktok-disabled-users-videos-suppressed.html>; Ghaffary, Shirin. (2019 October 15). Google employees are fighting over their company’s decision to ban a Hong Kong protest video game app. Vox.com. Retrieved from <https://www.vox.com/2019/10/15/20915729/google-hong-kong-video-game-revolution-of-our-times>; Gurman, Michael. (2019 October 8). Apple Pulls Taiwanese Flag Emoji From iPhones in Hong Kong. Bloomberg.com. Retrieved from <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-10-08/apple-pulls-taiwanese-flag-emoji-from-iphones-in-hong-kong>; Nellis, S. (2019 October 9). Apple removes police-tracking app used in Hong Kong protests from its app store. Reuters.com. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/hongkong-protests-apple/apple-removes-police-tracking-app-used-in-hong-kong-protests-from-its-app-store-idUSL2N26V00Z?utm_source=reddit.com; Sopan, D. & Stein, M. (2019, October 6). N.B.A. Executive’s Hong Kong Tweet Starts Firestorm in China. NYTimes.com. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/06/sports/daryl-morey-rockets-china.html>; Vincent, J. (27 May 2020). YouTube fixes error that deleted comments critical of the Chinese Communist Party. TheVerge.com. Retrieved from <https://www.theverge.com/2020/5/27/21271611/youtube-deletes-comments-critical-china-communist-party-fixed>; Wagner, L. (2019 October 8). Internal Memo: ESPN Forbids Discussion Of Chinese Politics When Discussing Daryl Morey’s Tweet About Chinese Politics. Deadspin.com. Retrieved from https://deadspin.com/internal-memo-espn-forbids-discussion-of-chinese-polit-1838881032?rev=1570564428660&utm_campaign=socialflow_deadspin_twitter&utm_medium=socialflow&utm_source=deadspin_twitter; Zialcita, P. (2019, October 8). Blizzard Entertainment Bans Esports Player After Pro-Hong Kong Comments. NPR.org. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2019/10/08/768245386/blizzard-entertainment-bans-esports-player-after-pro-hong-kong-comments>; Zialcita, P. (2019, October 11). Blizzard Reduces Penalties Following Public Backlash Over Esports Player Ban. NPR.org. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2019/10/11/769362193/blizzard-entertainment-faces-public-backlash-following-esports-player-ban>

² For the purposes of this resolution, “US Enterprises” is intended to refer to corporations, businesses, and other commercial organizations based in the US. It is not directed at non-profit organizations such as libraries.

“Resolution on U.S. Enterprises’ Abridgement of Free Speech” was reviewed and approved by the International Relations Committee and the Intellectual Freedom Committee to bring to ALA Council for consideration. It is endorsed by the Committee on Professional Ethics and Intellectual Freedom Round Table. The resolved clauses were adopted June 29, 2021, by ALA Council.