

How do Human Rights relate to Internet protocols?

Insights from work inside the Human Rights Protocol Considerations (HRPC) group

rev: 02

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Privacy by Default.

Important questions

- Is the Internet – are Internet protocols – value-neutral?
- Are Internet protocols political, looking at their design?
- Do Internet protocols consider Human Rights: should they?
- Which Human Rights, generally, play a role when looking at Internet protocols and their impact on Human Rights?
- What's the effect on Human Rights by current Internet protocols?
- What needs to be considered in protocol design to consider or even enforce Human Rights?

What is the HRPC group?

- HRPC: Human Rights Protocol Considerations
- It's a Working Group (chartered by 2015, cf. charter-irtf-hrpc) inside the IRTF: Internet Research Task Force
- IRTF is concerned with the future of the Internet, future technologies related to the Internet or also other forms of how a network of networks can function: focus is less on working solutions ("Running Code")
- Considerable work become visible by mid 2015:
 - draft-dkg-hrpc-glossary-00 (now RFC8280, by Aug 2017)
 - draft-varon-hrpc-methodology-00 (also RFC8280)

Aims of the HRPC work

(From approved charter: charter-irtf-hrpc-01)

- “To expose the relation between protocols and human rights, with a focus on the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.
- To propose guidelines to protect the Internet as a human-rights-enabling environment in future protocol development, in a manner similar to the work done for Privacy Considerations in RFC 6973.”
- “To increase the awareness in both the human rights community and the technical community on the importance of the technical workings of the Internet and its impact on human rights.”

Isn't ISOC/IRTF/IETF "neutral", "unpolitical"?

- RFC3935 ("A Mission Statement for the IETF"):
"The Internet isn't value-neutral, and neither is the IETF"
- Other RFCs and also the IAB (Internet Architecture Board) provide guidance towards privacy, call for mass encryption and are opinionated
- ISOC consistently speaks of the necessity of a free and open Internet for everyone (e.g., ISOC-CH fighting against censorship laws)
- Interesting conflicts inside the IETF: IETF opposing work on Lawful Interception (LI) and putting TLS 1.3 forward (against resistance from operators and secret service agencies)
- Human Rights in absolute terms, however, difficult: Human Rights can conflict (e.g., freedom of expression vs. privacy)

HRPC's first RFC: 8280

("Research into Human Rights Protocol Considerations")

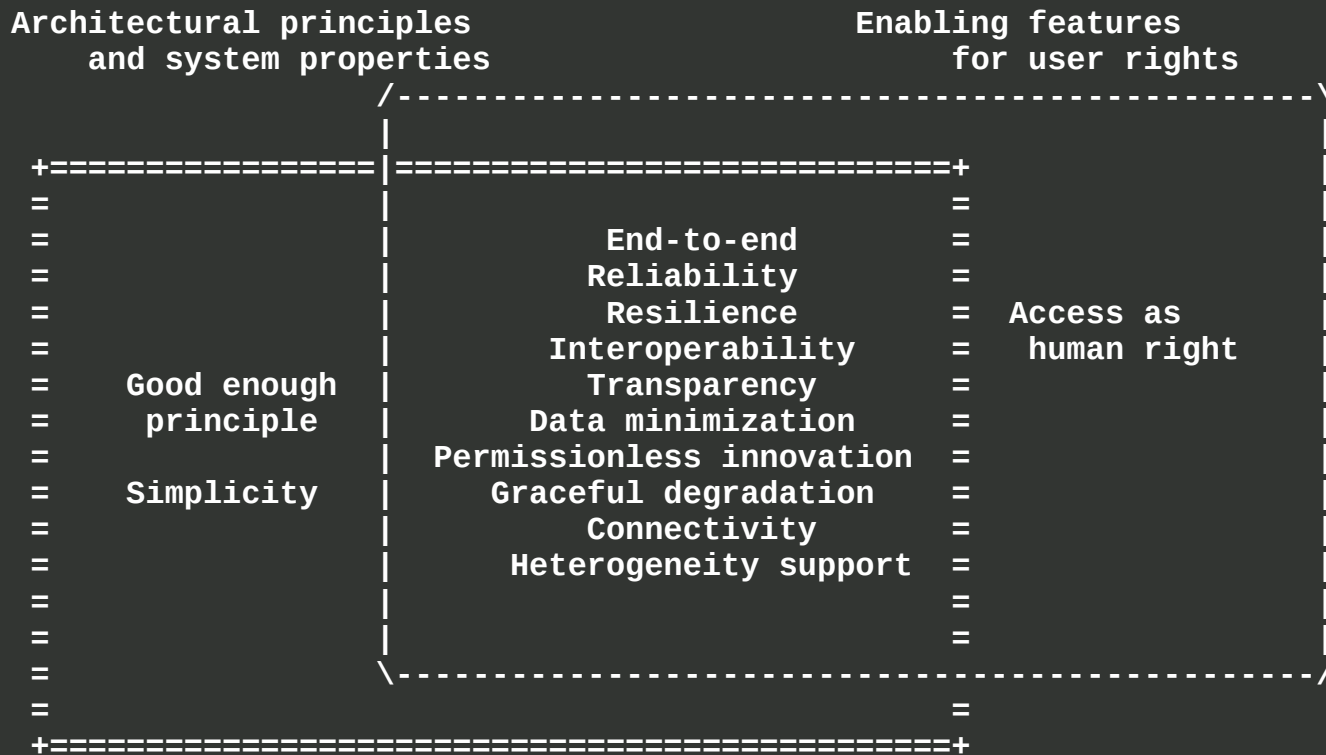


Figure 1: Relationship between Architectural Principles and Enabling Features for User Rights

HRPC's first RFC: 8280

("Research into Human Rights Protocol Considerations")

Technical Concepts	Rights Potentially Impacted
Connectivity Privacy Security Content agnosticism Internationalization Censorship resistance Open standards Heterogeneity support	Right to freedom of expression
Anonymity Privacy Pseudonymity Accessibility	Right to non-discrimination
Content agnosticism Security	Right to equal protection
Accessibility Internationalization Censorship resistance Connectivity	Right to political participation
...	

HRPC's first RFC: 8280

("Research into Human Rights Protocol Considerations")

Open standards Localization Internationalization Censorship resistance Accessibility	Right to participate in cultural life, arts, and science, and Right to education
Connectivity Decentralization Censorship resistance Pseudonymity Anonymity Security	Right to freedom of assembly and association
Reliability Confidentiality Integrity Authenticity Anonymity	Right to security

Figure 2: Relationship between Specific Technical Concepts with Regard to Their Contribution to an Enabling Environment for People to Exercise Their Human Rights

HRPC Internet-Drafts (work-in-progress)

- draft-irtf-hrhc-association-00 (“Freedom of Association on the Internet”)
- draft-irtf-hrhc-guidelines-01 (“Guidelines for Human Rights Protocol Considerations”)
- draft-irtf-hrhc-political-00 (“Notes on networking standards and politics”)
- draft-elris-hrhc-righttolife-00 (“Right to Life Issues in Internet Content and Protocols”)
- draft-rutkowski-hrhc-hraas-00 (“Human Rights as a Service (HRaaS)”)

HRPC: draft-irtf-hrpc-association-00

Abstract

This document scopes the relation between Internet protocols and the right to freedom of assembly and association. Increasingly, the Internet mediates our lives, our relationships and our ability to exercise our human rights. As a forum, the Internet provides a global public space even though it is built predominantly on private infrastructure. Since Internet protocols play a central role in the management, development and use of the Internet, the relation between protocols and the aforementioned rights should be documented and any adverse impacts of this relation should be mitigated.

HRPC: draft-irtf-hrpc-political-00

Abstract

The IETF cannot ordain which standards or protocols are to be used on network, but the standards developing process in the IETF has a normative effect. Among other things the standardisation work at the IETF has implications on what is perceived as technologically possible and useful where networking technologies are being deployed, and its standards output reflect what is considered by the technical community as feasible and good practice. Because it mediates many aspects of modern life, and therefore contributes to the ordering of societies and communities, the consideration of the politics and (potential) impact of protocols should be part of the standardization and development process.

Individual: draft-rutkowski-hrpc-hraas-00

Abstract

The establishment of Human Rights as a Service (HRaaS) has significant potential benefits. Although the generic expressions of human rights in legal instruments largely precludes definitive HRaaS specification, the establishment of a measurable objective is compelling in the global marketplace for internet capabilities made available to the public, including new virtualised NFV-SDN based implementations and protocols. This HRaaS draft provides a structured enumeration of human rights found in the principal global legal instruments against which standards bodies can evaluate their specifications, vendors can differentiate their offerings, and users can compare those offerings and make informed decisions.

Links & Questions & Discussions

- Learn about the IETF: <https://ietf.org/>
- Learn about the IRTF: <https://irtf.org/>
- Learn about the HRPC: <https://datatracker.ietf.org/rg/hrpc/about/>
- Work and meet HRPC group members
 - IETF meetings
 - hrpc@irtf.org mailing list: <https://www.irtf.org/mailman/listinfo/hrpc>
- ...
- Ask & Discuss!