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Poland: Discussions of TOR and Internet Filtering

Posted By [Sylwia Presley](#) On 2010-01-10 @ 23:55 pm In [Cyber-Activism](#), [Eastern & Central Europe](#), [Freedom of Speech](#), [Governance](#), [Human Rights](#), [Internet & Telecoms](#), [Law](#), [Poland](#), [Polish](#), [Politics](#), [Protest](#), [Software & Tools](#), [Technology](#), [Weblog](#) | [No Comments](#)

The end of 2009 in Poland was marked with the beginning of a public discussion of on-line privacy, the government's potential attempts to restrict access to websites and a growing awareness of TOR software supporting on-line anonymity.

On Nov. 6, [Piotr Waglawski](#) ^[1] [PL], aka [VaGla](#) ^[2] (recipient of the [Internet Citizen of the Year](#) ^[3] [PL] award in 2001, the first person to be awarded for commitment to development of local Internet and its role in communication between citizens and the authorities), posted [an article](#) ^[4] [PL] on his portal dedicated to law and Internet, mentioning Polish government's work on telecommunications law that included an article giving Internet providers the right to block websites with dangerous content (e.g., gambling - hence some refer to it as the 'gambling law') and giving the police, special services as well as the government an ability to create black lists of websites.

[Michal Trojnara](#), commenting on the post the very same day [adds](#) ^[5] [PL] to the original thread:

Just a minute ago I saw a live press conference with the prime minister on TV, who stated that there are "technical possibilities" to stop illegal gambling on international servers. I understand we are following [countries experienced in on-line censorship](#) ^[6] [link to Wikipedia article in Polish on Chinese Golden Shield Project].

On Nov. 19, Gazeta.pl, a Polish daily, [posted an article](#) ^[7] [PL] in which a connection was drawn between TOR software's ability to provide web users with anonymity, paedophile activities on-line and helplessness of the police in tracking those criminal offenses. Comments to it appeared under [a post](#) ^[8] on TechnoNews.pl, reacting to the accusations.

[Gość 4](#) [states](#) ^[8] [PL]:

Is the cost of our privacy too high? I think that tools like TOR should be publicly available.

[Massad](#) [points out](#) ^[8] [PL]:

First we will add filters you are mentioning, and then we can add any other filters, so, for instance, a human rights activist from China will not be able to inform the West about what's going on there.

Also on Nov. 19, Radio TOK conducted an interview with Piotr Waglawski, which was later [published on Vimeo](#) ^[9] [PL]. It features Piotr and another specialist, Krzysztof Mlynarski, explaining what TOR is and discussing inconsistencies of the argument used by the police that allowing anonymity on the web causes increase in paedophile crimes, and thus the police find it impossible to solve those.

In response to this video posted also on Wykop [a Polish version of Digg], [Glosnik](#) [mentions](#) ^[10] [PL]:

It's amazing how the topic of TOR started to appear in various media starting with this digg: <http://www.wykop.pl/link/253302/czy-wiesz-ze-internet-ma-podwojne-dno-efekt-wczorajszych-poszukiwan> ^[11]

Wykop itself exposed TOR to people, and now it is accused of paedophilia.

Wykop became a venue where the public decided to express their [protest](#) ^[12] [PL] against the

accusations and propositions to restrict access to Internet.

Silencer starts it, [saying](#) ^[12] [PL]:

Let's show our power to fight stupidity of the authorities. Let's initiate connecting knots!

Baniol [explains](#) ^[12] [PL] why he joins the protest:

I am 17, so I myself could be a victim of a paedophile :(I am joining this action not to help people connect but because I do not like the way of fighting paedophilia by targeting innocent people...

wm84 [does not agree](#) ^[12] [PL] though:

I DO NOT WISH that a bunch of anonymous teenagers claim themselves to be the Internet community. Mainly because for most of them Internet started when Wykop, demotivating sites and other services appeared - they serve nothing else than wasting of time. I will not support - even in theory - harm of any child.

On Dec. 15, another leading voice in this case, a specialist in on-line security, Pawel Wilk (who, back in May 2009, [posted about the TOR project](#) ^[13] [PL] and has been its advocate since then), [posted an article](#) ^[14] [PL] updating on the government's propositions dated from Nov. 13 to introduce the law allowing Internet providers gather personal data of web users (like, for instance, name and surname, ID number, address), creation of the so-called Registry of Banned Websites and Services. He also mentions laws which this proposal would break and human rights that the Polish citizens would be deprived of.

A governmental [press release](#) ^[15] [PL] from Dec. 17 confirmed that the Registry of Banned Websites and Services would indeed be created, but that the police would not receive personal data from Internet providers.

Help's [first reaction](#) ^[16] [PL] to this statement is:

Is there an organisation similar to [EFF](#) ^[17] in Poland which deals with following of those cases? If not maybe it's time for one, otherwise they will make us look like fools and introduce an Orwellian vision.

Simianus home [opposes](#) ^[16] [PL] it:

You behave like real criminals! Do you have something to hide? Everything is known about everyone because they have accounts on NK [Nasza-Klasa] and Śledzik and they describe there on-line everything they do, in their family and private life.

Later on, on Dec. 18, Pawel Wilk [posted an insightful article](#) ^[18] [PL] focused more on the role of TOR software in general, including an interview with TOR's executive director, [Andrew Lewman](#) ^[19]. Pawel Waglawski also commented on it in [a post](#) ^[20] [PL], pointing out the lack of governmental transparency.

Gime [agrees](#) ^[21] [PL] as to the process:

It is chaotic indeed, the idea behind it is unclear, the speed of work is surprisingly fast, a large amount of mistakes and ignorance on the way.

Arnold Buzdygan [adds](#) ^[22] [PL]:

In a normal, democratic country similar ideas would not even enter the mind of the authorities.

On Dec. 22, the Observatory of Media Freedom in Poland posted [the opinion of Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights](#) ^[23] [PL] on the topic:

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights expresses its concern about the legislative work on the draft law from Dec. 7, 2009, amending the law on gambling and other acts, and earlier a bill from Nov. 17, 2009, on the same issue. The proposed solutions introduce a number of fundamental changes to the sphere of rights and freedoms of individuals, and, moreover, they raise, in our view, reasonable doubt about their constitutional nature.

Article printed from Global Voices Online: <http://globalvoicesonline.org>

URL to article: <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2010/01/10/poland-discussions-of-tor-and-internet-filtering/>

URLs in this post:

- [1] Piotr Waglawski: http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piotr_Waglawski
- [2] VaGla: <http://prawo.vagla.pl/user/1>
- [3] Internet Citizen of the Year: http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internetowy_Obywatel_Roku
- [4] an article: <http://prawo.vagla.pl/node/8734>
- [5] adds: <http://prawo.vagla.pl/node/8734#comment-18605>
- [6] countries experienced in on-line censorship: http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Projekt_Z%C5%82ota_Tarcza
- [7] posted an article: http://policyjni.gazeta.pl/Policyjni/1,91152,7271969,Jak_dobrze_gwalcic_dzieci__Pedofil_radzi.html
- [8] a post: http://www.technonews.pl/Technonews/1,94439,7274016,Siec_TOR__poczatek_histerii_mediow.html
- [9] published on Vimeo: <http://www.vimeo.com/7730949>
- [10] mentions: <http://www.wykop.pl/link/274890/anonimowosc-tor-legislacja-i-pedofilia-w-mediach>
- [11] <http://www.wykop.pl/link/253302/czy-wiesz-ze-internet-ma-podwojne-dno-efekt-wczorajszych-poszukiwan>: <http://www.wykop.pl/link/253302/czy-wiesz-ze-internet-ma-podwojne-dno-efekt-wczorajszych-poszukiwan>
- [12] protest: <http://www.wykop.pl/link/274944/pozytywny-wykop-effect-na-siec-tor>
- [13] posted about the TOR project: <http://www.heise-online.pl/newsticker/news/item/CONFidence-2009-siec-anonimizujaca-Tor-773253.html>
- [14] posted an article: <http://www.heise-online.pl/newsticker/news/item/Polska-ujawnianie-danych-bez-zgody-sadu-i-filtrowanie-Internetu-885857.html>
- [15] press release: http://www.premier.gov.pl/centrum_prasowe/wydarzenia/id:3773/
- [16] first reaction: <http://di.com.pl/komentarze,29846,0.html>
- [17] EFF: <http://www.eff.org/>
- [18] posted an insightful article: <http://www.heise-online.pl/security/features/Anonim-za-kratami-887716.html>
- [19] Andrew Lewman: <http://www.torproject.org/people.html.en>
- [20] a post: <http://prawo.vagla.pl/node/8825>
- [21] agrees: <http://prawo.vagla.pl/node/8825#comment-20074>
- [22] adds: <http://prawo.vagla.pl/node/8825#comment-20080>
- [23] the opinion of Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights: http://www.obserwatorium.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2123:opinia-hfpc-w-sprawie-projektu-ustawy-z-7-grudnia-2009-r-przewidujcej-naoenie-na-operatorow-telekomunikacyjnych-obowizku-blokowania-dostpu-do-stron-internetowych&catid=47:aktualnosciprogram&Itemid=66

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