



Internet Shutdowns in Africa: A Growing Threat

Internet shutdowns are deliberate disruptions of online access, often by authorities to control information flow. Unlike accidental outages, shutdowns restrict free speech and civic participation. This presentation explores their impacts across Africa.

What Are Internet Shutdowns?

1. Definition

- Deliberate turning off of internet access by authorities to control information flow.

2. Arab Spring

- Prominent example of internet crackdown during pro-democracy protests.

3. eSwatini 2021

- Internet shutdown during protests, citing "security reasons".



How Governments Shut Down the Internet

1. Routing Disruption

- Stops transmission of information altogether. Users can't connect to the internet.

2. Packet Filtering

- Blocks specific sites or content. Example: Nigeria blocking Twitter in 2021.



Impact on Civic Space: Nigeria's Twitter Ban

1. Government Retaliation

- Twitter banned for 7 months after deleting President Buhari's tweet.

2. Freedom of Expression

- Ban impacted open civic space and ability to organize protests.

3. Economic Consequences

- Disrupted businesses and revenue streams dependent on the platform.



Legal Challenges: ECOWAS Court Cases

1. Nigeria Ruling

- ECOWAS court found Nigeria violated freedom of expression with Twitter ban.

2. Senegal Case

- Civil society organizations taking Senegalese government to court over 2023 shutdowns.

3. Ongoing Concerns

- Senegal experienced another blackout in February 2024 during elections.





Shutdowns and Human Rights Violations

1. Sudan Crackdown

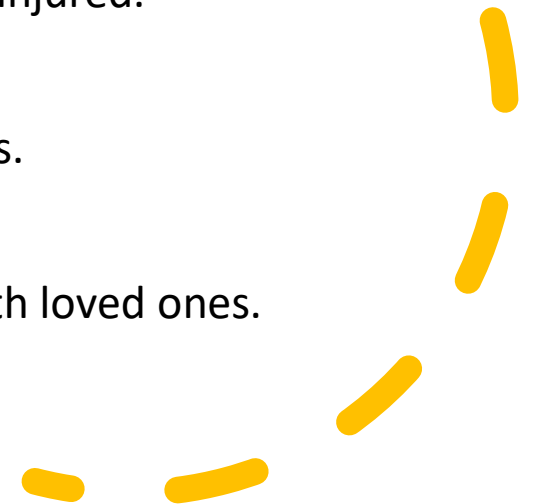
- Internet cut before pro-democracy protest. 17 killed, 250 injured.

2. Information Blackout

- Shutdowns provide cover for violent actions by authorities.

3. Critical Services

- Loss of access to vital information and communication with loved ones.



Global Impact and UN Stance

- UN Declaration
- Implementation
- Ongoing Threat
- Universal internet access as human right (2011)
- Not widely adopted by countries
- Internet exploitation for harm continues

