

Web founder warns of Internet disconnect law 'blight'

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British computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee, who is credited with inventing the World Wide Web, discusses web science during a press conference at The Royal Society in London. Berners-Lee warned Tuesday of the "blight" of new laws being introduced across the globe allowing people to be cut off from the Internet.

Tim Berners-Lee, the man credited with inventing the world wide web, warned Tuesday of the "blight" of new laws being introduced across the globe allowing people to be cut off from the Internet.

"There's been a rash of laws trying to give governments and Internet service providers (ISPs) the right and the duty to disconnect people," he told a conference on [web](#) science at the Royal Society in London.

The "current blight" includes a French law that comes into effect this year that threatens to cut people off if they illegally download from the

Internet, and a new British law passed in April which could see similar action, he said.

"If a French family can be forcibly disconnected from the Internet by [law](#) for a year because one of their children downloaded something that some company asserts that they should not have downloaded, without trial -- I think that's a kind of inappropriate punishment," Berners-Lee said.

He added: "I'd like to go on using the Internet. If it gets cut off, or for some reason things go wrong, in some cases, for me, my social life would disintegrate, for other people it may be access to medical information."

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) professor said the US Senate was also considering a bill this week that would have the government create a blacklist of Internet sites that US ISPs would be required to block.

Twenty years after his breakthrough while working at CERN, the European particle physics laboratory, Berners-Lee said "the net has got to a point that is so critical".

Given the importance of the web in everyone's lives, he urged the Internet experts gathered at the conference to act on the encroachment of the once free-for-all online world. "We have this duty of care," he said.

While Berners-Lee said ISPs should not in general be responsible for the content they were carrying, he admitted that issues of anti-terrorism and serious organised crime were "an exception".

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