

Rights groups eye 'superheroes' for Internet defense

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The Internet Defense League is set to be launched. The league, which aims to crush attacks on online freedom anywhere in the world, has several dozen participating organizations.

The Internet's "superheroes" are rallying to defend online freedom, while taking a page from Hollywood's playbook.

The launch set Thursday of the Internet Defense League coincides with the US release of the new Batman film "The Dark Knight Rises," and will use a bat -- er, cat signal -- to highlight the campaign.

"While member sites broadcast the news online, we blast our 'cat signal' into the sky with crowd-funded spotlights in cities around the world (on Batman's opening night!)," the league's Web page said.

The league, which aims to crush attacks on online [freedom](#) anywhere in the world, has several dozen participating organizations, including the Mozilla Foundation, Computer & Communications Industry Association and Electronic Frontier Foundation.

Representative Darrell Issa also voiced support for the effort, joining a conference call to promote the effort.

"Thanks for having me and let's keep the web #open," he said in a tweet.

The New America Foundation, a Washington think tank, said the IDL's goal was to "sound the alarm quickly to millions of users, through what people are calling the IDL 'a bat-signal for the Internet.'"

Launch events were planned in San Francisco, New York, Washington, London and Ulan Bator.

Rainey Reitman, a member of the Electronic Frontier Foundation and of the defense league's steering committee, said much of the energy for the new movement came from the campaign to defeat the Stop Online Piracy Act.

Reitman said the campaign aims to keep a watch out for threats to a free Internet anywhere in the world.

"One country can pass legislation that can affect anyone who is trying to access websites hosted in that country," she said.

"We see Internet policy as a global issue."

The beacons being used Thursday will be replaced by online alerts, according to Rainey. So participating websites can post alerts anytime there is a perceived threat to online freedom.

"We're calling on everyday Internet users to defend our online rights," she said. "To be like [Batman](#) in the sense of whenever our rights are threatened there will be a signal put out."

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