

Tech-backed coalition makes transparency push global

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People use their smartphones and tablets in a shopping mall in Bangkok on March 19, 2013.

An Internet freedom coalition backed by US technology giants asked Thursday for 21 countries to release information on national security and law enforcement data requests.

The Global Network Initiative, which includes Google, Facebook,

Yahoo and Microsoft, asked the countries to "report on the requests they make for electronic communications surveillance and to make it legally possible for companies to report regularly to the public on the government requests that they receive from law enforcement as well as national [security authorities](#)."

Letters were sent to senior government officials responsible for foreign affairs, justice, and security, with copies to data protection authorities, the group said.

Copies were sent to representatives at the United Nations offices in Geneva, in advance of discussions on human rights and communications surveillance at the 24th session of the Human Rights Council, the organization said.

The move comes with US tech firms in a battle with the US government to release more information on the role of companies in [surveillance programs](#) revealed in recent months by intelligence leaker Edward Snowden.

The tech firms say they are not allowed to reveal number of national security requests, and that more transparency would boost the confidence of their users.

The Global Network Initiative, which seeks to promote freedom of expression and privacy in the digital age, sent the requests to the 21 countries in the Freedom Online Coalition, which have committed to collaborating to advance Internet freedom.

The countries are Austria, Canada, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, Kenya, Latvia, the Republic of Maldives, Mexico, Mongolia, The Netherlands, Sweden, Tunisia, Britain and the United States.

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