

Reaction to the Cancellation of RightsCon 2026:

On behalf of the European digital rights and democracy community

4 May 2026

We are gravely concerned by the sudden [decision of the Zambian government to cancel RightsCon 2026](#) just days before the conference was due to take place. RightsCon is the biggest annual gathering of the global digital rights community and a crucial moment in the democracy support calendar every year.

The de facto cancellation of RightsCon is in contradiction with the democratic standards enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and indeed the Constitution of Zambia, most notably [freedom of expression](#) and [freedom of assembly](#). Furthermore, the decision will negatively impact Zambia's reputation in the global democracy community, and represents a blow to the national economy. It also contributes to the global trend of repression of civil society, already weakened by significant funding cuts and legislation limiting civic space.

We call on the European Union and its Member States to inform the Zambian government that this decision is deeply alarming and throws a shadow over the EU's collaboration with Zambia. We further encourage representatives in attendance at UNESCO's World Press Freedom Day, taking place in Lusaka next week, to use this platform to call out this repressive move by the Zambian government.

We urge the Zambian government to fully respect the rights and freedoms of RightsCon participants who have already arrived or are en route to Lusaka.

We express our full solidarity with the conference organiser, Access Now, and its local partner, Bloggers for Zambia. They have put in tireless work to make this event a success in order to contribute to the advancement of digital rights and democracy around the world. We stand firm in our resolve to continue to work together and make democracy thrive, offline and online.

Signatures:

Accountability Lab

Accountability Lab East and Southern Africa

Association of European Journalists in Belgium (AEJ Belgium)

Blueprint for Free Speech

Centre for Democracy and Technology Europe

Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties)

Club de Madrid

Danes je nov dan, Inštitut za druga vprašanja (Slovenia)

Demo Finland

Digitale Gesellschaft (Germany)

DW Akademie (Germany)

European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)

European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL)

European Digital Rights (EDRi)

European Exchange GmbH

Electronic Frontier Finland - Effi ry

European Partnership for Democracy

European Sex Workers Rights Alliance

Fundación Maldita.es (Spain)

IFEX

IT-Political Association of Denmark (IT-Pol Denmark)

Media Diversity Institute

Media Voice - Media and Communication Educational and Research Center

Metamorphosis Foundation for Internet and Society (North Macedonia)

Mnemonic

Poliscope

Privacy Network (Italy)

The European Fact-Checking Standards Network

WHAT TO FIX

Zašto ne (Bosnia and Herzegovina)