



# INDIVIDUAL EXPERTS, INCLUDING ACADEMICS

## WHO WE ARE

The Global Network Initiative (GNI) is a multistakeholder organization that brings together **individual experts (including academics joining in their personal capacity)** and academic institutions, civil society organizations, information and communications technology (ICT) companies, and investors from around the world to protect and advance freedom of expression and privacy rights in the ICT sector. GNI facilitates this collaborative work by setting a global standard for responsible company decision making, conducting independent assessments of company commitments, fostering confidential dialogue among members, and serving as a multistakeholder voice in the face of government restrictions and demands. [See a full list of members and observers.](#)

## WHY GNI MATTERS

Governments around the world are increasingly involved in Internet governance and policy as they face evolving challenges in relation to law enforcement, national security, and the protection of human rights in the digital age, leading to greater scrutiny of ICT companies, which provide the platforms, networks, and services for online engagement.

Every day, ICT companies make important decisions about data storage, selling or licensing technology, and responding to government requests to access data or restrict access to information. These decisions have implications for the rights to freedom of expression and privacy of billions of users. GNI provides guidance based on international human rights law to ICT companies on how to evaluate and respond to these scenarios.

GNI plays a critical role in the ICT ecosystem, providing inclusive solutions for challenging issues and increasing the collective ability to protect and advance the right to privacy and freedom of expression.

## HOW GNI IMPLEMENTS ITS MISSION

GNI implements its mission through shared learning, policy engagement, a framework for responsible company decision making, and a unique accountability mechanism in the ICT sector. More specifically, we:

- > **SET** a global standard for free expression and privacy in the ICT sector through the [GNI Principles on Freedom of Expression and Privacy](#)
- > **HELP** ICT companies establish rights-respecting policies and procedures, particularly in relation to privacy and freedom of expression
- > **PROMOTE** accountability and continuous improvement of member companies' policies and procedures through periodic assessment by independent experts
- > **FOSTER** a unique, multistakeholder, safe space for shared learning and sensitive discussions
- > **RAISE** our collective voice to advocate for rights-protecting laws and policies, from fighting network disruptions to responding to extremist content without harming human rights



## HOW GNI MEMBERS WORK TOGETHER

GNI strives to reflect global diversity within its four constituencies, which drive change by promoting the GNI Principles and working together on freedom of expression and privacy rights, while maintaining distinct roles.

**CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**, including human rights and media freedom groups, bring their in-depth expertise on human rights along with direct connection to people on the ground around the world.

**COMPANIES** undertake independent assessments on their implementation of the GNI Principles within their organizations and publicly report on their progress over time. These assessments provide valuable insights into how companies put their GNI commitments into practice, including how law enforcement mechanisms work and the challenges companies and their staff may face on the ground.

**INDIVIDUAL EXPERTS (INCLUDING ACADEMICS) AND ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS** inform GNI's learning and policy activities with research and analysis on current digital rights issues.

**INVESTORS** recognize that meaningful commitments to human rights can help companies in which they invest avoid risks and build trust, leading to more productive and sustainable user engagement. They promote the GNI Principles through their wider engagement in the ICT sector.

## BENEFITS OF GNI MEMBERSHIP FOR INDIVIDUAL EXPERTS (including Academics joining in their personal capacity)

- > Contribute research and analysis to GNI's policy and learning initiatives reaching relevant audiences to help set global standards and promote and protect freedom of expression and privacy rights
- > Access to experts, materials, and events to support up-to-date curricula and research on freedom of expression and privacy rights
- > Opportunities for public speaking engagements and publishing through GNI's events and publications
- > First-hand opportunities to interact with companies and learn about their policies and procedures to protect users' rights, as well as to inform companies' on-the-ground operations

## BECOME A GNI ACADEMIC MEMBER

The academic constituency is open to individual experts (including academics) and academic institutions. Potential applicants may be academics affiliated with a university or other institution of higher education in a given country, dedicated to independent research and teaching in the university environment in areas related to **GNI's mandate**, and who want to join in an individual capacity. Potential applicants may also be independent experts who possess appropriate work history and demonstrable expertise in human rights and/or the Internet and ICT sector. Publications, advocacy and/or public speaking on subjects relevant to GNI are preferred, but not necessarily required.

## WHAT WE EXPECT FROM OUR MEMBERS

- > Adopt the GNI Principles and GNI Core Documents.
- > Support the GNI Principles and GNI **mission** through the academic constituency.
- > Contribute to shared learning, accountability, and collective action among GNI members.
- > Actively participate in GNI meetings and activities.
- > Individual experts (including academics joining in their personal capacity) do not pay a membership fee.

# APPLICATION PROCESS

To apply for GNI membership as individual experts or academics, here is the application process and information that we need from you.

1

## A Statement of Intent

Send a statement of intent (1-2 pages long) to [info@globalnetworkinitiative.org](mailto:info@globalnetworkinitiative.org), following these requirements:

- > State your intent to join the academic constituency.
- > Articulate your interest in joining GNI, more specifically:
  - How does your work relate to GNI's mandate?
  - Linked examples of your work as it relates to the **GNI Principles**.
  - Have you ever participated in GNI events/activities or worked with other digital rights organizations, including any **GNI members**? If yes, please explain.
- > Your expectations and commitments, more specifically:
  - How will GNI membership benefit you?
  - Was your intention to join GNI informed by a specific experience regarding human/digital rights? If yes, please explain.
  - What do you plan to contribute to GNI?
  - Do you commit to implement and advance the GNI Principles and Implementation Guidelines, and contribute to shared learning and collective action on GNI-related issues?
  - Do you commit to abide by the confidential nature of the discussions within GNI?

Also include:

- > A curriculum vitae.
- > A minimum of two professional references.
- > A brief description of your areas of academic interests, expertise, and research foci

2

## Follow Up

Once we have received your SOI, GNI staff may contact you to discuss membership in more detail, if your application is viable.

3

## Consultation with existing GNI participants

We will talk with members of the constituency that you plan to join, in this case the academic constituency. As a next step, your application materials will be reviewed by our multistakeholder Membership Committee.

4

## Decision by the GNI Board

As a final step, the Executive Director will make a recommendation to the GNI Board members who will then vote on your application.

5

## Notification of the GNI Board's Decision

You will be contacted by the Executive Director who will inform you of the GNI Board's decision.