

Internet in repressive societies.

There is a lot of talk in the internet about communicating securely in repressive societies. This is becoming one of the 21st century most interesting conspiracy debates.

There is no foolproof way to protect your information, as Raul Reyes could have told you had he survived the seizure of his laptops. Interpol cracked all his encrypted files in less than a month. But assuming that you have not yet come to the full attention of the authorities, there are a few things you can do.

One of the easiest ways to keep your email away from the curiosity of public employees is to write the emails using an anonymous Google account or similar, but never sending the email message. Just keep it there as a draft. Then share the encrypted login password with your counterparts, who will be able to read it there by logging in, and answer with another draft message. Change the password regularly. One up from there is to encrypt your message with a scheme such as PGP or truecrypt (all free) and add it to the draft unsent email as an attachment in a .pdf or similar “container”. You can also use PGP to send encrypted email messages, but that is looking for trouble.

If you must twit, use a cheap prepaid mobile phone that can't be traced back to you. As soon as you send the message from a public place, shut down the phone and take out the battery and replace the SIM card with a decoy one immediately. Get somebody you trust in Russia to set up your twitter account without any reference to you. Or go to Rumania and do it yourself there.

Blogging will become more difficult, but not impossible. You need an accomplice overseas who is prepared to post for you. Give your friend only encrypted posts. Your friend would use a program like Tor, or similar, to hide his/her IP address while blogging from somebody else's place. It helps to get hold of the wireless password of someone who doesn't know your friend, and blog from a parked car outside their house. But watch out for suspecting secret service personnel in a car near you. Choose your friend well: your life will depend on it.

Then sit back and wait for the repression to abate a little, perhaps as a result of your efforts to achieve regime change. But don't expect too much from the next government: no politician wants to give away repressive powers.