

## Tips for the Crusading Blogger

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A Paris-based media watchdog has released a free guide with tips for bloggers and

dissidents to sneak past Internet censors in countries from China to Iran.

Reporters Without Borders' *Handbook for Bloggers and Cyber-Dissidents* is partly financed by the French Foreign Ministry and includes technical advice on how to remain anonymous online. It was launched at the Apple Expo computer show in Paris on Thursday and can be downloaded in Chinese, Arabic, Persian, English and French.

"Bloggers are often the only real journalists in countries where the mainstream media is censored or under pressure," Julien Pain, head of the watchdog's Internet Freedom desk, writes in the introduction.

In a bid to inspire budding web diarists around the world, the 87-page booklet gives advice on setting up and running blogs, and on using pseudonyms and anonymous proxies, which can be used to replace easily traceable home computer addresses.

"With a bit of common sense, perseverance and especially by picking the right tools, any blogger should be able to overcome censorship," Pain writes.

The advice varies depending on the user's level of paranoia — from changing cyber-cafes to sending cryptographically signed messages using specially formatted e-mail.

The guide explains circumvention technologies that can break through government filters but warns bloggers to check how severe the penalty will be if they are caught using them.

No one knows for certain just how big the so-called "blogosphere" has become. Technorati, a top blogging search engine, says it indexes 17.1 million sites worldwide.

In a series of personal accounts, bloggers explain how they tried to beat censorship in countries such as Iran, China and Nepal.

"We can write freely in blogs," writes Arash Sigarchi, an Iranian journalist who was nonetheless sentenced to 14 years in prison for posting messages online that criticized the Iranian regime.

RSF, as the organization is known under its French acronym, ends the handbook with a "championship" of top internet censors, starting with China and its "clever mix of investment, technology and diplomacy."

"A call for free elections ... has a maximum online life of about half an hour," Pain writes of censorship in China.

The San Francisco-based Electronic Frontier Foundation also published an online guide this year to help web diarists keep their blogs anonymous. That includes

pointers on anonymizing technologies, including the EFF's own Tor, and tips on keeping postings out of search engines. The guide, though, was mostly aimed at preventing firings rather than bypassing censorship.

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