

**Peter Sunde Kolmisoppi @brokep** Thu Feb 25 14:47:45 +0000 2021

The non-profit organisation **@ICANN**, that controls the central backbone of the internet (the root-servers) and has a monopoly on letting registrars (think godaddy) resell .com/.net/.org/etc domains, denied my application to become a registrar. A thread.

Since 2019 I've had an active application with ICANN. They're famous for being a bureaucratic nightmare to deal with, so I expected a long process. It got delayed by the passing of my mom last year and by covid. That's understandable.

By becoming accredited by ICANN you have the possibility to make direct deals with the organisations that run certain top level domains (.COM .NET .ORG etc). ICANN only accredits you, gives you an accreditation ID and you make the deal with each organisation separately.

Without an accreditation by ICANN, you can't make that deal, except with ccTLDs - top level domains that belong to countries (think 2 letter TLDs, .DE .FI .NO .SE) that are independent from ICANN oversight.

Any toplevel domain that is not 2-letters requires ICANN accreditation. From .GAY to .MOBI to .BLACKFRIDAY. Without ICANN accepting you, you can't make a deal with another party. So, a monopoly.

ICANN runs the root-servers as well. They're the DNS servers that make sure that we can find each other on the internet. They're like the phonebook of the internet. They required (basically) to translate <https://t.co/bw53Ouw86i> to an IP and thus reaching it's intended audience.

ICANN is a non-profit corporation based in the US. The US government decided to transfer the infrastructure control to another party, based in the US. The rest of the world has no say in reality, but we're all depending on it.

So short recap here: ICANN accreditation is mandatory for a business to resell 95% of all domain names. ICANN is a corporation in the US. I have for decades worked against a centralised structure, publicly voiced my concern about these structures (from DNS to social media).

ICANN is quite slow at replying to emails regarding the accreditation. We've emailed, a lot, regarding the TOS that I proposed for my organisation. We've made the changes in coordinance with them and a local lawyer to make the TOS fit with local regulation and ICANN requirements.

For me this accreditation has been important to make sure that we can have more flexibility in working with domain names, offer better privacy for our services (like DNSSEC for certain domains that is not implemented with our current middle men).

But most importantly, I have for years worked within organisations as well as outside in order to raise my voice and concern about the structures. I don't always believe in working from within a system, but I'm also pragmatic - I can do both. I always raise my voice.

After the first final review of our application, ICANN made a background check of everyone involved in the application (we're a team). My first contacts with ICANN I've been very open with who I am - I mentioned they should google me. My background is.. let's say different.

I'm well-known in the internet industry, and especially in the domain name industry, for everything going on with The Pirate Bay, and also for the past years working with **@njal\_la** that has pissed a lot of people in the industry off. Njalla does nothing illegal nor even immoral.

After the background check I get a reply that I've "checked the wrong boxes" on parts of the application. There's some boxes saying: (paraphrasing) "have anyone in the team being convicted of fraud or similar in the past 10 years".

Noone in the team has been convicted of that. Nor murder, manslaughter, theft, breaking & entering, or anything else. I was involved in a case of aiding with copyright infringement from 2005-2006. That's 15+ years ago. And not fraud or similar.

In fact, in the past 15 years I've actually worked in a company that was under the inspection of the UK Financial Conduct Authority. No problems. No issues. If I was convicted of fraud or similar, that would have raised concerns, let me tell you that.

However, **@ICANN** is of another opinion. After spending over half a year to review the application (with a bi-weekly email stating that the delay is normal, nothing to be concerned about), they decided to deny the application since "the wrong box was ticked".

Not only that, but they're also upset I was wanted by Interpol. They both claim that I've lied on the application (!) and also that I also admitted that I was wanted by interpol. I got a bit confused. I should also add that being wanted by interpol in

itself is not a crime.

The background of that is that I simply didn't feel like getting locked up. It's also not a crime to refuse. There's no penalty. Being sentenced to prison in Sweden means the government has an obligation to put you in prison. You have no legal obligation to help. So I didn't.

I understand that I might be weird. I might be annoying. I might be a handful. I might be demanding. I might care too much about an open and decentralised internet. Honestly, skip the "might be"; I simply am.

For years and years I've been problematic. 11 years ago I openly talked about making a Peer 2 peer DNS system. The title of one article from 2010 says "Fed up with ICANN" <https://t.co/IWJ8tlvHQu>

One of the most censored website in the world is The Pirate Bay. The site I was involved in has lost lots of domains. ICANN has always found it problematic. They've been annoyed. They are annoyed. I've always stood my ground on the other side.

One time I woke up and found an e-mail. A guy had registered <https://t.co/9hn3H4IveO> - ifpi being the international record companies organisation. They've forgot to renew the domain so he registered it. Then he transferred it in to my name as a (quite funny) joke.

Ifpi took it to something called a UDRP, a way to figure out who has the rights to a certain domain name. This is mostly arbitration run by WIPO. Yes, World Intellectual Property Organization. My not so best friends.

WIPO stated they didn't really believe me that I got the domain from someone else, since <https://t.co/9hn3H4IveO> all of a sudden was "international federation of pirates interests" instead of the other organisation. I laughed, because well, honestly, I would have hosted it myself.

WIPO has been quite upset with me personally. Ifpi too. Ifpi also happens to be "Accredited Observers" with WIPO. I never got invited to any arbitration, I just sent in an e-mail explaining that I got the domain and it was funny. I would have taken credit if I was smart enough.

I've had lots and lots of domains suspended for dubious reasons. Not only The Pirate Bay. And friends of mine have had domains suspended, and important organisations I've worked with. Wikileaks famously lost their domain when we hosted them.

So, for me it's been of utmost importance to become a member of the club here - ICANN is a monopoly, they hang out with their friends in their trusted circles. So of course, I should be allowed to join. I have fulfilled all their criteria, and worked in good faith with them.

Instead they're saying I'm a liar and also not welcome. They ended their denial with saying that they also reserve the right to deny anyone for any reason, and they don't have to disclose it. This is the monopoly I've been upset about for decades. And they just proved it again.

I even e-mailed Göran Marby, the CEO of ICANN, asking him to look into it. We have mutual friends. He said he'd look into it and then he stopped replying to my e-mails. All my e-mails has been curtious and transparent with all my intentions and goals.

I've emailed, added people on Skype. I've even used that old technology of normal phones to call their office. We're 10 hours difference from eachother. I've been up at night. They never call back, they don't email back.

Now, ICANN also publicly brags about how they're important and have influence over the global internet. They brag about having people from all backgrounds involved in their organisation. They do not however have someone who wants to change from inside.

I'm not after destroying **@ICANN**. What I'm after is actually pushing them to become a democratic institution. I've many times publicly stated that I wish for them to be controlled by more than just the US government - it's a democratic requirement.

It's one of few organisations I see that is not needed to blow up. They've previously done good things. Lately; less so. They have old CEOs and bosses that has been opting for removing the price limit on .ORG only to all of a sudden work for a company that wants to buy .ORG.

There's been a lot of corruption from within this organisation lately. I want to clean it up. I have no illusion of us as people to be able to take back control from ICANN, so the only pragmatic way is to be inside this system and patch the leaks until we can find an alternative.

Now, I am 42 years old. When I did TPB i was in my early 20s. According to their requirements, if I was a murderer I would have been accepted, even if I killed someone recently.

Obviously the denial of my application is that of a dislike of me as an individual. Since the organisation is depending on ICANN accreditation to serve a purpose, the only thing I can do now is to quit, and leave the board. So that my co-workers are not affected.

Hopefully ICANN will accept them, but most likely they won't believe that I'm not involved, just like they said it was more likely I lied about the ifpi domain than just millions of people hating ifpi and loving freedom of information. A dangerous view for those who run internet.