Is the Internet a Human Right?

I can imagine the dispute it will cause if I post this question on the Internet. There will be people claiming that they would rather die without the Internet, and therefore access to Internet should be guaranteed simply because they are human beings. The others, probably lived in the Pre-Internet era, would argue that the Internet is not as essential as food, housing and freedom from torture. Then people who say yes to this question will come and discuss how important the Internet has become in modern societies. And the dispute will never end.

No matter how desperately I would like to stop people from arguing about my post, I will have no right to shut them up. This is because receiving or expressing ideas is a basic human right, and people often enable this right by reading or writing posts on the Internet.

I wouldn't say the Internet itself is a human right. Human rights should be basic and everlasting, whereas the Internet didn't exist until twentieth century and just gained popularity in the recent 30 years. Nevertheless, the Internet has certainly become the best and the most popular tool to enable the freedom of speech, which is a widely recognized human right.

Why is that? Firstly, there is a larger audience on the Internet. When we express our ideas, we want to get support and make an influence on more people. On the Internet, there is a better chance of voice being heard, supported and replied, just like my imaginary post could get shared, liked and commented.

Secondly, though it's not encouraged, we can remain anonymous when we speak on the Internet. Anonymity often lets people feel free to express their true opinions without worrying about whether the opinions comply with their identities in the real world. Therefore, freedom of speech is better enabled in an anonymous environment.

Thirdly, as human beings, we cannot live well without communication with other people. The Internet and social media sites provide an effective way of establishing connections. In the traditional society, the number of people we can meet was limited. With the Internet, we can reach people from somewhere we've never heard of and become friends with each other. Actually, the bonds we have on the Internet in some ways are even stronger than what we had before. Once we get friends on social media, we keep getting to know what's going on with their life and making interactions with them. Since it's quicker and cheaper to contact friends through the Internet, it's less likely that we'll lose contact with them.

Though it might be too bold to say the Internet itself is a human right, the Internet is undoubtedly the best media ever to enable the freedom of speech. The Internet is so essential in modern society that banning access to the Internet is often seen as a sign of violating freedom of speech. Therefore, full access to the Internet should be guaranteed just as a human right.