

Private, stable and landed: Meet Tor Browser 8.5

May 23 2019, by Nancy Cohen



A Tor browser has arrived as a stable release for Android. Ultraprivate. And some Tor wish-listers will say, finally. "Until recently, it was only available on desktop devices. Now, the stable version is available for Android, too," said George Burduli, *XDA Developers*.

The Tor Project had worked on the browser before and released the alpha. "After months of work and including feedback from our users,

Tor Browser 8.5 includes our first stable release for Android plus many [new features](#) across platforms."

Burduli called Tor "the most popular privacy-focused browser, which hides your location by redirecting the traffic to multiple proxy networks and also [blocks](#) trackers."

They were making sure they could provide protections for users of the Android platform. They said, "Mobile browsing is increasing around the world, and in some parts, it is commonly the only way people access the internet. In these same areas, there is often heavy surveillance and censorship online, so we made it a priority to reach these users."

Here is the Tor Blog announcement, which was dated May 21: "Tor Browser [8.5](#) is now available from the Tor Browser download [page](#) and also from our distribution directory. The Android version is also available from Google Play and should be available from F-Droid within the next day."

(F-Droid is a community-maintained software repository for Android.)

The blog noted that this Tor Browser 8.5 "is the first stable release for Android." What did they work on for the stable release?

"We made sure there are no proxy bypasses, that first-party isolation is enabled to protect you from cross-site tracking, and that most of the fingerprinting defenses are working."

Ryan Whitwam, *Android Police*, said yes it had been possible earlier on to reach Tor on Android. "When last we talked about the Tor Browser, you still needed [Orbot](#) to connect"—but now you get the fully integrated package. Whitwam said, "Each time you start it up, Tor Browser will have you connect to the network to anonymize your traffic."

The Tor team is calling this release (v8.5) of the Tor Browser on Android. The blog mentioned the "fresh" look.

"We made Tor Browser 8.5 compatible with Firefox's Photon UI and redesigned our logos and about:tor page across all the platforms we support to provide the same look and feel and improve accessibility."

Photon is a Firefox [design](#) language. "Photon Project" was welcomed as bringing UI changes and improvements to the upcoming versions of the Firefox web browser.

A Firefox Quantum 67.0 review in *Neowin* said that "Firefox (Quantum) users will be impressed by the modern new design that puts their needs first. With the new (fast and fluid Photon) design, Firefox leaps ahead with a new interface that reflects today's reality of High DPI displays and users who are more [task](#) focused than they've ever been. Photon doesn't just look good, it's also smarter."

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Actually, the software is based on Mozilla's [Firefox](#) browser, said Stephen Shankland in CNET, "an open-source project anyone can modify. Mozilla and Tor developers have been working more closely together on their two projects in recent years."

The blog called out a number of known issues to date. Among them concerned Windows: "While we improved accessibility support for Windows users during our 8.5 stabilization, it's still not perfect. We are in the process of finishing patches for inclusion in an 8.5 point release. We are close here."

Opinions?

Shankland commented that the [browser](#) could be useful "whether you're an activist trying to avoid government monitoring or just an ordinary person trying to stay out of the clutches of ad companies."

Sorry, there's no iPhone version, said CNET. "Tor steers iPhone and iPad owners toward a separate app, though, called Onion Browser."

According to the Tor blog, "Though we cannot bring an official Tor Browser to iOS due to restrictions by Apple, the only app we recommend is Onion Browser, developed by Mike Tigas with help from the Guardian Project."

More information: blog.torproject.org/new-release-tor-browser-85

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