

# *Information for officials and diplomats of countries and entities with disputed territories*

(Approved September 2013)

The features displayed on maps often need to be set out in a specific way to meet legal or cultural requirements in particular jurisdictions. Such requirements may conflict with requirements in other jurisdictions.

The OpenStreetMap Foundation identifies these features to be the main ones of concern:

- Names
- Borders and boundaries
- Descriptions

If you are representing a jurisdiction, such as by being a member of a government organisation, this document outlines the position of OpenStreetMap and what you can do to meet your concerns. You may also be interested as a concerned citizen of your country or as a member of an ethnic or cultural group.

In this context, we use terms “jurisdiction” and “group” in the de facto sense whether or not you or others formally recognise them.

In summary:

1. OpenStreetMap is a database. You are free to make maps from our data leaving out or putting in what you need for harmony with your general usage, culture and legal system. We encourage you to do this directly or to support one of our many worldwide local OpenStreetMap communities that share your issue.
2. The existence of a name, boundary location or description in the OpenStreetMap database does NOT imply that that it is legally correct in any jurisdiction.
3. The OpenStreetMap community operates under the “on the ground” principle, recording what is actually currently used in a particular area, giving pre-eminence to data collected in-situ. This is generally what is used on our main example map at <http://www.openstreetmap.org>.
4. We recognise the importance of names, borders and descriptions to different national, ethnic, culture or language groups. We have and will continue to build mechanisms where alternatives can be recorded and easily used in maps more suitable to you. We encourage you to contribute such data to OpenStreetMap, to help build our technical

infrastructure or to support someone who will.

5. However, to remain neutral and to provide a practically useful service to a global community, we cannot delete base data to suit a particular legal jurisdiction.

Please also note that the OpenStreetMap Foundation maintains but does not actively create any of the data in OpenStreetMap geo-database. The OpenStreetMap Foundation publishes the database and supports but does not control the project. Data is contributed and integrated exclusively by large numbers of contributors under terms laid out in our contributor terms at [http://www.osmfoundation.org/wiki/License/Contributor\\_Terms](http://www.osmfoundation.org/wiki/License/Contributor_Terms)

## Names

The OpenStreetMap community operates under the “on the ground” principle. If a name appears on the ground, for example a street sign, then that is the preferred name to use since a navigation system that does not use the same names as those that are signposted is just clearly impractical. This is recorded as a “name” in our database and is the one generally used on our main example map.

However, we recognise that different national, ethnic, culture or language groups may utilise a different name. We accommodate this by providing the facility for contributors belonging to different groups to record what they see as the name for a particular feature. For example, “name:en” records the name used by the English-speaking community and “name:es” that employed by the Spanish-speaking community. The Spanish community can then make a map using “name:es” in preference to the generic “name” or “name:en”.

We encourage different groups and communities to use our data, collect and contribute data important to you, and to make your own maps that are harmonious with your general usage, culture and legal system.

## Borders and boundaries

National borders are particularly sensitive. Currently, we record one set that, in OpenStreetMap contributor opinion, is most widely internationally recognised and best meets realities on the ground, generally meaning physical control. In areas without clearly defined borders, the line is approximate. Our database structure enables map-makers to easily ignore this set and substitute another more appropriate to your needs.

In the future, we may look at supporting alternative sets directly.

## Descriptions

The same “on the ground” principle is applied. If a civilian airport in a disputed territory is clearly functioning as such, then that is how it is described in OpenStreetMap, irrespective of its legal status amongst groups claiming jurisdiction.

We frown on data deletions, but you may want to add a note to the feature, for example using our “description” database field.

We encourage map-makers to use our “on the ground” data and edit what appears on your maps as appropriate.