(Video) Iran: Regime's Internet Censorship Plan and Its Consequences

Two major nationwide protests shook the regimes in 2018 and 2019. People called for regime change and democracy. When the regime started its brutal crackdown.

PARIS, FRANCE, January 18, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In an exclusive report, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) wrote that, according to Iran's state-run media, the clerical regime's parliament is about to pass an internet "protection bill," restricting the country's internet and online freedoms even further.

The bill, which is officially called the "Cyberspace Users Rights Protection and Regulation of Key Online Services,"

According to Iran's state-run media, the clerical regime's parliament is about to pass an internet "protection bill," restricting the country's internet and online freedoms even further.

will disrupt citizen access to international services, primarily social media, and allow the regime's security apparatus to control internet gateways in order to intensify suppression of dissent.

> " In recent years, despite the regime's extensive demonization campaign against the main Iranian opposition, Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), thousands of youths have joined the MEK's Resistance Units network."
>
> *NCRI*

In his speech on July 20, 2021, the mullahs' Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, expressed his utter fear of social media, describing the need to control it as his regime's "significant task at hand." He added that officials should pay attention to it as a "key issue."

"The cyberspace and social media are out of our control. This is a [serious issue]. Social media shouldn't be used any way [people] want. Like water, it should be channeled properly. Others are now managing social media, and we shouldn't stand idly by," Khamenei said, according to Tasnim News Agency, an outlet linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Quds Force.

"The enemy has taken a combat formation through social media. The [regime] should also take its own position and prepare itself," Khamenei acknowledged.

Other regime officials have expressed similar fears. "It is like handing [the social media] to the enemy so it could perform psychological operations amid the economic warfare," Brigadier General Gholamreza Jalali, head of the regime's Civil Defense Organization, told the state-run ISNA news agency in March 2021.

Two major nationwide protests shook the regime's foundations in 2018 and 2019. People called for regime change and democracy. When the regime started its brutal crackdown, citizen journalists and the social network of the main Iranian opposition quickly spread the news of the regime's vicious actions and people's calls for democracy to the world community. In addition, protesters and the opposition used social media to organize further protests.

The Iranian regime had to impose an internet blackout to prevent additional

On July 20, 2021, the mullahs' Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, said his utter fear of social media, describing the need to control it as his regime's "significant task at hand." He added that officials should pay attention to it as a "key issue."

The Iranian regime had to impose an internet blackout to prevent additional uprisings and to stop news and information flow to the outside world. Iranians from all walks of life use social media to organize daily protests.

uprisings and to stop news and information flow to the outside world.
Iranians from all walks of life use social media to organize daily protests due to exacerbating economic and social woes.

In recent years, despite the regime's extensive demonization campaign against the main Iranian opposition, Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), thousands of youths have joined the MEK's Resistance Units network The MEK's Resistance Units have been shattering the regime's atmosphere of suppression and fear by conducting daring daily operations under the nose of the mullahs' overt and covert agents.

"The MEK, stationed in the capital of a European country, are busy night and day creating an ambiance against the Islamic Republic on Twitter, Instagram, and Telegram," General Ebrahim Golfam, Cultural Deputy at the Joint Chiefs of the regime's Armed Forces, said in May 2019.

So, by adopting the new bill to restrict the internet, the regime intends to prevent the ruling theocracy's downfall. It will also have severe economic consequences for millions of Iranians who earn a living through social media, particularly during the worsening Covid-19 crisis.

For roughly over one million Iranians, social media platforms such as Instagram, Telegram, and Twitter serve as virtual businesses. The proposed bill requires international technology firms to have a legal representative in Iran as a means of cooperating with Tehran to increase online surveillance.

Companies that host unregistered social media apps in Iran would risk penalties. Millions of Iranians must either turn to regime-affiliated platforms and risk their basic freedoms or risk sinking deeper into poverty.

The regime's former Minister of Information Technology, Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi, acknowledged that the bill curtails access to information and leads to a complete ban on popular messaging apps.

It added that the bill will "deliver an irreparable blow to small online businesses" while increasing the rate of brain drain and further aggravating the people's grievances against the ruling regime.

The regime's former Minister of Information Technology, Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi, acknowledged that the bill curtails access to information and leads to a complete ban on popular messaging apps.

In a letter to Reza Taghipour, Chairman of the Joint Commission to Review the "protection bill," the Parliamentary Research Center warned about the economic and social consequences of adopting this bill.

According to the parliament's Research Center on December 31, 2021, the bill's adverse impact

on the digital economy will induce a significant capital exodus while encouraging corruption and embezzlement.

It added that the bill will "deliver an irreparable blow to small online businesses" while increasing the rate of brain drain and further aggravating the people's grievances against the ruling regime.

Who is Behind the "Protection Bill"?

While the regime's ultimate goal is internet censorship and control, some institutions and individuals are directly

The regime is in a serious bind. If it adopts the bill, it would risk major protests by an already angry population. And if it doesn't, then more youth will join the MEK, and protests would become more organized and more frequent.

involved and will stand to benefit from the so-called "protection bill." These include: "Research Institute of Islamic Culture and Art", "Research Institute of Islamic Culture and Thought", "Center for Deep Strategic Studies" and "Institute for Research and Explanation of the Discourse of the Islamic Revolution."
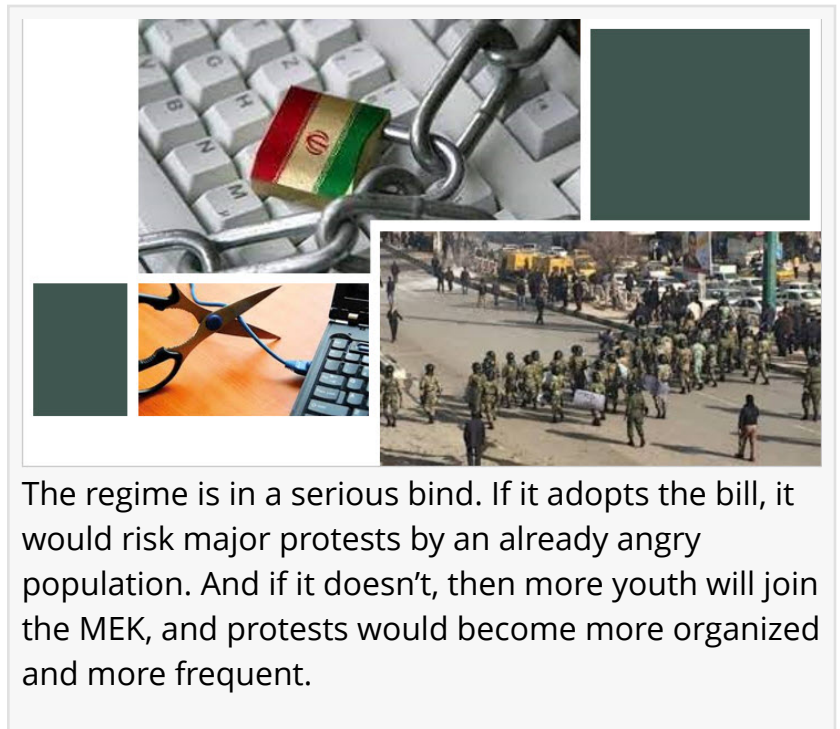
These entities receive budgets from the government but are private institutions under the IRGC and Khamenei's control. The Institute of Islamic Culture and Thought alone receives 293 trillion rials from the 2022-2023 general budget. Meanwhile, the share of the Cancer Research Institute of the University of Tehran in the 2022-2023 budget is 50 billion rials.

Nepotism and corruption also play a role. Abbas Moradi, Sina Kalhor, Massoud Fayazi, and Ruhollah Momen are some notable individuals and relatives of regime officials behind the measure. They promote "domestic social media platforms."

Massoud Fayazi, the Scientific supervisor of the bill's review has no background in computer science. He told the state TV that "the era of filtering social media is over," and that the regime should instead "establish basic regulations for internet services."

By forcing international social medial platforms out of Iran, companies like Sharif Amid Computer Company will take over the market. This company is headed by Maryam Zakani, daughter of Tehran's Mayor Alireza Zakani, and her husband Hossain Heydari. Heydari also works in Arsh Ideographer Company, another application-developing company, whose most prominent application is "Rubika."

Currently, Iran's service providers allow users to download this application for free. However, there is some speculation that after social media platforms like Telegram are forced out of Iran,

Rubika would shift to a paid subscription model.

Another so-called domestic application is "Instagram Plus." In a TV debate on July 31, 2021, Abbas Mordai, another planner of the "protection bill," acknowledged that, "On Instagram Plus we will have online banking." "Moradi's words revived the bitter experience of previous attempts to produce local copies of social media platforms such as Golder Telegram, or search engines. These actions resulted in squandering millions of dollars of the country's wealth," the state-run Hamshahri daily reported on August 2, 2021.

Quoting Nima Namdari, Member of the Board of Directors of Tehran Computer Guild System, Hamshahri wrote that adopting the internet protection plan will result in a "10,000 trillion rials embezzlement [equivalent to $35 million based on the current free-market exchange rate]."

"According to this plan, 10% percent of the shares of private companies providing telecommunication services will be provided to the Ministry of Communications to develop replacement apps for filtered platforms. If the Ministry of Communications does not meet this objective, this credit will be handed over to the Secretariat of the High Council for Cyberspace," which is controlled by Khamenei.

Like other decisions adopted by the regime, limiting the internet will spark major protests, a "bitter nightmare" already predicted by state-run media. "While people are crushed under the burden of poverty and Covid-19 has damaged many businesses, the parliament is seeking to pass a law [restricting] internet. This plan has shocked society, as people fear the loss of their businesses. This will have consequences," the state-run Khabar-e Fori website reported on December 1, 2021.

Despite Khamenei's direct order for controlling social media, his handpicked deputies in parliament are hesitating. "The most basic issues are left unattended in our country due to mismanagement.

Then we seek approval to intrude on people's privacy, and under the pretext of protection, reduce the speed of the Internet and bandwidth," said a member of parliament, Ruhoallh Hazrat-Pour, on November 14, according to Khan-e Mellat News Agency.

The regime is in a serious bind. If it adopts the bill, it would risk major protests by an already angry population. And if it doesn't, then more youth will join the MEK, and protests would become more organized and more frequent.
if this is the very definition of a desperate regime whose days are numbered because it has run out of options and can find no way out of compounding crises.

Shahin Gobadi
NCRI
+33 6 51 65 32 31

This press release can be viewed online at: https://www.einpresswire.com/article/560826738