



October 2022

FOC Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns in Iran

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We, the members of the Freedom Online Coalition, are deeply alarmed by and strongly condemn the measures undertaken by Iran to restrict access to the Internet following the nationwide protests over the tragic killing of Mahsa Amini. In furtherance of what has become a longstanding pattern of censorship, the Iranian government has to a large scale shut down the Internet yet again for most of its 84 million citizens nationwide by cutting off mobile data; disrupting popular social media platforms; throttling Internet service; and blocking individual users, encrypted DNS services, text messages, and access entirely.

Millions of Iranians rely on these and other tools to connect with each other and to the outside world. By blocking, filtering, or shutting down these services, the Iranian government is suppressing the right of peaceful assembly and freedoms of association and expression; eroding civic space; reinforcing a continued climate of economic uncertainty; disrupting access to healthcare, emergency services, and financial services; preventing payments for salaries, utilities, and education; and limiting the ability of journalists, human rights defenders, and others to report on and document human rights violations or abuses that are taking place during Internet shutdowns, or communications disruptions.

We emphatically call on the Government of Iran to immediately lift restrictions intended to disrupt or prevent their citizens from accessing and disseminating information online and from communicating safely and securely. Moving forward, we also call on Iranian authorities to refrain from imposing partial or complete Internet shutdowns and blocking or filtering of services and to respect Iran's international human rights obligations, including under articles 19, 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

We continue to stand in solidarity with the Iranian people in their call to exercise their rights to freedoms of opinion and expression, both online and offline.

Freedom Online Coalition Background

The FOC is a multilateral coalition of 34 governments that collaborate to advance Internet freedom worldwide. The Coalition provides a forum for like-minded governments to coordinate efforts and work with civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders to support the ability of individuals to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms online. The FOC invites all states that support a free, open, secure, and interoperable Internet to apply to join the FOC.

The mission and vision of the FOC are founded upon the notion that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online; a pioneering notion originally outlined in the founding FOC Hague Declaration, reaffirmed in the Nairobi Terms of Reference, Tallinn Agenda, and San José Statement, and further confirmed in UN Human Rights Council resolutions 20/8, 26/13, 28/16, and 32/13, adopted July 5, 2012, June 26, 2014, March 26, 2015, and July 1, 2016, respectively, as well as resolutions 68/167, 69/166, and 71/199 adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly respectively on December 18, 2013, December 18, 2014, and December 19, 2016.

The FOC seeks to identify best practices regarding the application of human rights obligations and commitments in the evolving online landscape, as well as to call attention to conditions that undermine those rights.

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