

Internet access in Iran disrupted as anger at protesters' death sentences grows

Wed, 2020-07-15 16:52

LONDON: Internet access was restricted across Iran on Tuesday after widespread anger on social media over death sentences handed to three protesters.

A Farsi hashtag translated as #DontExecute began trending globally on Tuesday evening according to Radio Farda, and Iranian activists – including the exiled Prince Reza Pahlavi, the son of deposed Shah Mohammad – circulated its English equivalent #StopExecutionInIran.

The online rallying call was prompted by a decision from Iran's judiciary to uphold the death penalty of three men accused of taking part in anti-regime protests in November last year.

Saeed Tamjidi, 26, Mohammad Rajabi, 28, and Amirhossein Moradi, 26, were arrested in large-scale demonstrations that swept the country fueled by economic hardship and rising petrol prices.

After initially being released, they were convicted of a range of offenses including sabotage, armed robbery and illegally fleeing the country during a closed trial in January.

Tuesday's verdict sparked a sharp rise in people using the hashtag on social media, including prominent influencers, politicians and sportspeople. Former vice-president Mohammad Ali Abtahi and national team footballer Hossein Mahini were among those calling for the government to listen to the people's demands.

"An important part of this system, in case of protests, believe that measures should be toughened so they (protesters) don't get brazen," Abtahi wrote. "I have written many times that the system does not have the chance to be stubborn."

At the same time the hashtag was trending, internet monitoring group NetBlocks.org said service providers linked to Iran's security apparatus began slowing internet connection speeds.

The group also reported disruption to internet access across Iran, saying: "Significant disruption to multiple networks in #Iran" occurred at 9:30 p.m. local time and impacted "citizens' ability to communicate."

Confirmed: Significant disruption to multiple networks in [#Iran](#) after 5 p.m. UTC (9:30 p.m. local time); real-time network data

show significant impact to subscriber internet lines limiting citizens' ability to communicate; incident ongoing pic.twitter.com/XZ1rNXgRHB

– NetBlocks.org (@netblocks) [July 14, 2020](#)

The Iranian government regularly and increasingly blocks access to the internet – a process called “throttling” – during episodes of unrest or during widespread demonstrations.

Iranian officials said Tuesday that appeals made by the three men against their death sentences had failed. Lawyers for the three men said they have had no access to the case and that their clients' confessions were “extracted under aberrant conditions.”

In an open letter published online, the lawyers called for a judicial review, citing fears the three men could be put to death in the immediate future.

“We have repeatedly stated that we have not been permitted to defend (our clients) and that they have no information about their trials,” [the letter said](#).

Calls from the public for death sentences of those who took part in last year's protests to be dropped have grown in Iran since November, especially on social media.

An estimated 251 people were executed in Iran in 2019, according to Amnesty International, which is the second highest tally in the world after China. The regime has also issued a number of new death sentences in recent weeks.

Amnesty on Tuesday demanded Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei stop the execution of Tamjidi, Rajabi and Moradi.

Iran's [@khamenei_ir](#) must quash the death sentences of protesters–Amirhossein Moradi, Saeed Tamjidi & Mohammad Rajabi–immediately! Their trial was unfair & they said they were subjected to torture through beatings, electric shocks and being hung upside down. [#اعدام_نکنید](#)

– Amnesty International (@amnesty) [July 14, 2020](#)

Amirhossein Moradi

Saeed Tamjidi
Mohammad Rajabi#[اعدام_نکنید](#)

– Amnesty International (@amnesty) [July 15, 2020](#)



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Iran says it has executed Iranian agent linked to CIA Tehran to execute man convicted of spying for CIA

[Firefighters battle flames at major Cairo highway](#)

Tue, 2020-07-14 20:14

CAIRO: A huge fire engulfed cars after a pipeline exploded next to the Cairo-Ismailia desert road on Tuesday.

Egypt's petroleum ministry said the fire was under control.

The pipeline, reportedly used for petrochemicals, exploded affecting cars at the site.

Local reports said some 20 fire trucks headed to the scene to tackle the blaze.

No casualties have yet been reported, but a number of vehicles in the area seem to have been severely damaged. The traffic department called on all drivers to stay away from the highway to allow fire fighters and police access the site. Social media users shared video clips and pictures of the fire site, with heavy smoke billowing across several Cairo districts.



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Egypt footballer gets harassed for sharing photo with his 3-year-old girl
Emotional video shows blind dog welcome shelter carer in Egypt

[Libyan parliament calls on Egypt to](#)

protect Sirte, Al-Jufra from attacks

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Tue, 2020-07-14 09:05

CAIRO: Libya's parliament has called on Egyptian armed forces to intervene and protect the two countries' national security.

It welcomed a recent speech from Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in which he called for concerted efforts between the two nations to achieve security and stability in Libya.

The parliamentary statement came a few days after Turkey again threatened to attack the Libyan cities of Sirte and Al-Jufra in a conflict pitting the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli, headed by GNA Prime Minister Fayez Al-Sarraj, against the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by military commander Khalifa Haftar.

An imminent military escalation could affect the security and stability of Libya and threaten North African countries in general because of the large number of mercenaries that Ankara has sent to the country.

"The Libyan parliament is the only legitimate representative elected by the Libyan people and representative of its free will, confirming its acceptance of what was said in the Egyptian president's speech in the presence of representatives of Libyan tribes," it said. "We call for concerted efforts between Libya and Egypt to ensure the defeat of the invading occupier and preserve our common national security. It will bring security and stability to our country and the region."

Egypt's armed forces may intervene to protect Libyan and Egyptian national security if they saw an "imminent threat" to the security of the two countries, it added. "Our confrontation with the invaders guarantees the independence of the Libyan nation and preserves the sovereignty and unity of Libya, and preserves the wealth and capabilities of the Libyan people from the ambitions of the colonial invaders ... the supreme word will be for the Libyan people in accordance with their free will and supreme interests."

The parliamentary statement said that Libya rejected Turkish interference and any violation of Libyan sovereignty.

"Egypt represents a strategic depth for Libya at all levels of security – economic and social – throughout history. The Turkish occupation directly threatens Libya and the neighboring countries, especially Egypt, which will only stop with the efforts of neighboring Arab countries."

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that his country would carry out oil and gas exploration in the Mediterranean region on the coast of

Libya, which observers said revealed Ankara's intentions to plunder Libya's oil wealth. They said that the Turkish regime apparently planned to solve its looming economic crisis by stealing the wealth of people in the Mediterranean.

Turkey faces a number of challenges that prevent the implementation of its plan to advance on Sirte and Al-Jufra, including the lack of a true popular movement as the majority of people in the two cities support LNA forces and refuse the entry of militias or mercenaries.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry told the UN Security Council earlier this month that Egypt would not allow militias to threaten its security. Shoukry, speaking about the Libya situation, said: "We will not tolerate these dangers to our country. We call on the international community to face the danger of terrorist organizations in Libya."

Mohamed El-Ghabbari, an Egyptian military expert and former director of the National Defense College, said that Turkey was unaware of Libya's vast geography and also unaware of important matters regarding the role of Libya's tribes.

"The General Command of the Libyan Army announced more than once its readiness to confront any attempts by Turkey to advance toward Sirte and Al-Jufra," El-Ghabbari told Arab News.

He said that its forces and military units were ready to repel any attack by Ankara by mercenaries and militias funded by the GNA government in Tripoli. Egyptian support would arrive "at the appropriate time."

El-Ghabbari said the Turks must not forget that their recent statements came at a time when the Egyptian military was conducting military drills aimed at eliminating mercenaries from irregular armies, "which means that Egypt is ready to respond at any time."

Ahmed Fouad Abaza, an Egyptian parliamentarian, backed the demand of the Libyan parliament, saying that the political chaos in Libya was caused by the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporter Turkey "which seeks to stabilize the Brotherhood organization on Libyan lands and seeks to control Libyan oil to save its collapsed economy."

Abaza added that, after the failure of Turkey and Qatar to revive the Brotherhood in a number of Arab countries, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was seeking to try to revive the Brotherhood inside Libya.

Abaza hailed the LNA in the face of "terrorist and criminal acts carried out by Turkey inside Libyan territories" and said that if "blood and destruction" were present in any country or place within the region that Erdogan's regime was behind it.

He called on the "legitimate political forces" inside Libya and the Libyan people to stand behind the LNA so that all Libyan lands could be "liberated from desecration and the abomination of evil, darkness and terrorism."



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Egypt carries out military drill near Libya border
Conflict-hit Libya to restart oil operations but with low output

[Iran says it has executed Iranian agent linked to CIA](#)

Author:

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Tue, 2020-07-14 09:26

Iran has executed a former defense ministry worker who sold information to the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Iranian judiciary said on Tuesday.

Reza Asgari had linked up with the CIA during his last years serving at the defense ministry and sold the agency information about Iran's missile program, judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili said, quoted by its Mizan website.

He retired from the ministry four years ago. Esmaili said Asgari was executed last week.

Separately, Esmaili said a death sentence for Mahmoud Mousavi-Majd, an Iranian accused of spying for US and Israeli intelligence, is among those still to be carried out. Last year, Iran announced it had captured 17 spies it said were working for the CIA.



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Iran-backed Houthi missile attacks are 'threat to regional peace' Explosion as fire breaks out at Iranian industrial complex

Hagia Sophia will open outside prayer time, says Turkey

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Tue, 2020-07-14 09:25

ISTANBUL: Turkey's Hagia Sophia could open to visitors outside prayer times and its Christian icons will remain, religious officials said on Tuesday, after a court ruling paved the way for it to become a mosque.

The sixth-century Istanbul landmark's museum status – in place since 1934 – was revoked on Friday and control was handed to the religious authority, Diyanet.

The decision sparked condemnation from Western governments, Russia and Christian leaders – Pope Francis saying he was “very distressed.”

Hagia Sophia spent almost 1,000 years as a cathedral before being converted into a mosque in 1453 and later a museum.

Diyanet said in a statement on Tuesday that Christian icons in Hagia Sophia were “not an obstacle to the validity of the prayers.”

“The icons should be curtained and shaded through appropriate means during prayer times,” it said.

“There is no obstacle from a religious perspective to Hagia Sophia Mosque being open to visitors outside prayer times.”

Hagia Sophia, a major tourist attraction, has been the scene of Islam-linked activities in recent years. In 2018, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recited a verse from Qur'an at the building.

Erdogan, who said the first Muslim prayers in Hagia Sophia would begin on July 24, has insisted the building will be open to all, including non-Muslims.



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EU weighs up action against Turkey as relations take a double hit
Pope Francis 'very distressed' over Turkey's Hagia Sophia conversion to mosque