

Two Israelis arrested in global 'dark' internet probe

Author:

Tue, 2019-05-07 23:00

JERUSALEM: Two Israelis have been arrested on suspicion of setting up a "dark" internet site that was used to buy weapons, drugs and stolen credit cards, Israeli police said on Tuesday.

The suspects, in their mid-30s, were arrested during a joint investigation with the FBI and Israel's cybercrime unit. Further arrests were made in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Brazil.

"The suspects were arrested after setting up an Internet site that was in the 'dark'," the police said in a statement. "The dark Internet site was used for illegal activities and crimes.

"The site had been active for a long period of time and millions of dollars of transactions had been made on the site."

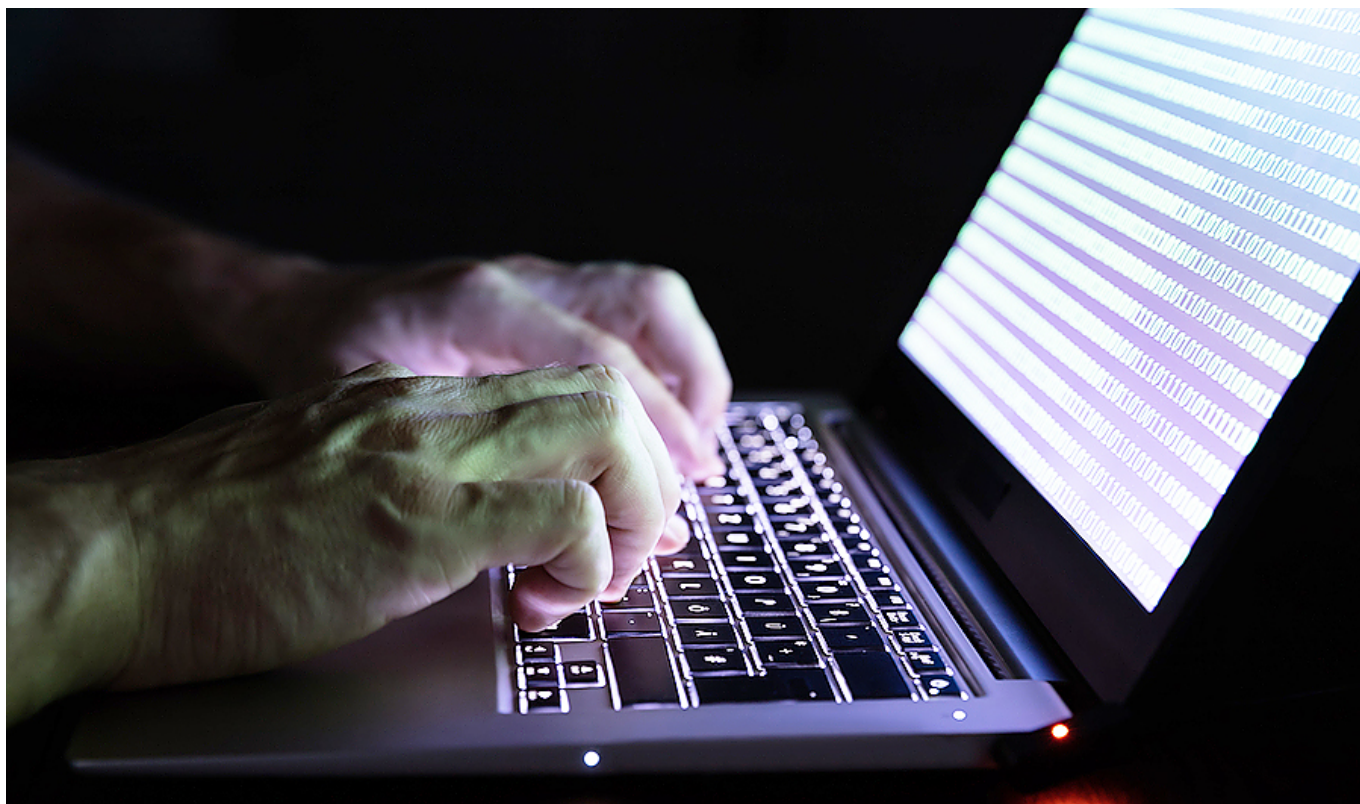
The police said the site guided users to other sites used for illegal activities and crimes which were being investigated.

"The sites worked together covering each other and marketing illegal actions and transactions," police said, adding that the transactions were made using Bitcoin.

The two Israeli suspects are due to appear before a Tel Aviv court. No further details were given.

Three German nationals accused of running one of the world's largest dark websites for selling drugs and other contraband were arrested last week and charged in two countries following a two-year investigation.

A fourth man who allegedly acted as a moderator and promoter for the site was taken into custody in Brazil.



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Tue, 2019-05-07 22:57

KHARTOUM: Sudan's military council said on Tuesday it wants to keep Islamic Sharia law as the basis of legislation.

The council said it agrees with the opposition's view of the general transitional governing structure

However, speaking during a press conference in Khartoum, Shams Al-Deen Al-Kabashi, the spokesman for the military council, said the power to declare a state of emergency should go to the sovereign authority not the cabinet, as the opposition has suggested.

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Sudan's military council says it will present vision for country's transition on Monday

[Daesh frustrates aid effort in northwest Syria](#)

Author:

Tue, 2019-05-07 22:52

BEIRUT: Threats, interference and aid deliveries in jeopardy – relief workers say Daesh terrorists are adding to the huge challenges they face in violence-plagued northwest Syria where a fragile cease-fire is at risk.

The Idlib region, controlled by a former Al-Qaeda affiliate, is one of the last areas of the country that the Bashar Assad regime has yet to recapture.

Around 2.7 million of its roughly 3 million residents need humanitarian assistance, according to the UN.

Most rely heavily on food, medicine and other aid brought across from Turkey by the UN and charity groups.

But efforts by the “de-facto authorities” in Idlib “to tamper with, impede or frustrate the delivery of humanitarian assistance including by undermining the safety of humanitarian workers, has been an unfortunate reality,” said Rachel Sider of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

The Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) militant group and its civil wing – the so-called Salvation Government – cemented control over Idlib in the beginning of the year.

“The interference has increased since January,” said a humanitarian worker in Idlib, who wanted to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation.

“There is not a single aid organization that has been spared threats, arrests, or closure for very silly reasons,” he said, even as Idlib has come under increased bombardment by the regime and its ally Russia over the past month.

In April, Daesh militants threatened to detain him because he refused to provide them with food baskets his team was distributing at a camp for the displaced in southern Idlib, he added. “They told me I should give them aid,” said the 27-year-old.

He said HTS also detained him for four days seven months ago in Idlib city for photographing aid deliveries without their authorization.

Militants beat him, confiscated his laptop, and broke his camera, he said.

“They told me I should thank God I was being released alive.”

Paul Donohoe of the International Rescue Committee said “aid groups face interference from armed groups in Idlib, such as the restricting of access to vulnerable populations or attempting to influence beneficiary selection and the location of aid delivery.”

He declined to provide more detail but a second humanitarian worker in Idlib, who also asked to remain anonymous, said several projects by international aid agencies have been dropped in recent months because of such meddling.

A plan to provide bakeries in Idlib with free flour was scrapped because the Salvation Government insisted on limiting beneficiaries to bakeries it is affiliated with, the 29-year-old said.

“Our activities as an organization have become very modest since this happened to us,” he added.

The governing body is also trying to ensure its affiliates are among those who secure tenders with aid agencies, which attempt to avoid this through screening, he said. “They want a cut of any project implemented in the area,” he added. The encroachment has sparked concern that relief items and aid money may fall into the wrong hands.

Sider, of the NRC, said: “In this environment, aid agencies cannot completely eliminate the risk of diversion and we’d like donors to recognize this.”

The UN has said it is taking extra measures to combat diversion.

They include “additional screening from partners, suppliers, even workers, staff, and third party monitoring, including the use of modern technology – barcoding, establishing hotlines – to be able to be sure that aid reaches the right people,” the UN regional coordinator for Syria, Panos Mourtzis, told AFP.

There has yet to be any major decrease in humanitarian assistance but some donors have cut funding, said Ahmed Mahmoud, Syria director for the Islamic Relief charity.

“So far, five major hospitals have had to close entirely and seven other medical facilities – including hospitals focusing on paediatrics and obstetrics – severely cut back their operations due to funding cuts,” he said.

Though there could also be other reasons, “some donors may have concerns regarding the shifts in control in northwestern Syria, which may have affected their funding decisions.

“As one facility after another shuts its doors, the pressure only grows on those that remain,” he said.

For its part, the Salvation Government denies jeopardizing relief efforts.



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More than 150,000 displaced in northwest Syria in one week: UNWarplanes strike hospital in Syria's rebel-held Idlib

[US secretary of state in Baghdad on unannounced visit – AFP](#)

Tue, 2019-05-07 22:54

BAGHDAD: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo landed in Baghdad late Tuesday on an unannounced visit, an Iraqi government source told AFP, after he cancelled a trip to Germany amid escalating US-Iran tensions. The source, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the high-security nature of the visit, said Pompeo was set to meet Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi.

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[Streaming app for Ramadan TV shows launched in Egypt](#)

Author:

Tue, 2019-05-07 21:50

CAIRO: The Egyptian Media Co. has launched a new TV streaming app called Watch iT, which allows users to watch Ramadan shows for monthly or yearly subscription fees. It will initially host 15 shows.

Every year, thousands of Egyptians spend fasting hours watching TV dramas, with others doing so in the evenings after breaking their fast. For many, the free video website YouTube is their host of choice.

But the new app will mean that is no longer an option for many people, however, as the company has banned the 15 shows hosted on the Watch iT app from airing on YouTube.

The move will put many in a tight spot, forced either to see the shows on satellite TV, or to pay for the app.

The service, which is downloadable through Google Play Store and iOS, has garnered a lot of criticism from Egyptians on social media.

"I think the idea is doomed to fail. It's just an attempt to create their own Netflix

and monopolize the market without studying it or understanding the nature of their audience," Rafiq Mahfouz, a 25-year-old writer, told Arab News.

Watch iT comes at a price many Egyptians cannot afford to pay. Downloading the app is free, but actually watching the shows costs EGP 99 (\$5.77) per month, with a partial subscription costing EGP 555 per year, and a full subscription EGP 999.

"They can't monopolize this market without studying it very well. The service was announced two days ago, the app itself is quite a mess, the pricing is unreasonably high, and their service was down on the first day of Ramadan," Mahfouz added.

Despite the massive launch and promotional campaign, users are complaining about technical issues and being unable to create accounts.

“The majority of Egyptians are not familiar with the concept of pay-to-watch. These TV dramas are mainly targeting the middle class, who cannot afford these prices,” said Mahfouz.

Other streaming platforms in Egypt, like Shoof Drama and Shoof Max, are offering their services for this year’s Ramadan shows for free on their websites.

Ramadan in Egypt is an enormous season for TV, with new programs and shows being released every year.



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Ramadan: ‘The Super Bowl of Mideast advertising’ Discount stores helping Ramadan shoppers to stock up