



# Uzbekistan's digital rights violations

## Recommendations from Previous Cycle

During the third UPR cycle, Uzbekistan received **212 recommendations, two of them addressed digital rights specifically:**

- 101.95 Allow the media to operate without government interference, and ensure access to all sources of information, including foreign sources and the Internet.
- 101.101 Bring legal provisions that restrict the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the media into line with Uzbekistan's international human rights obligations, including by allowing effective access to information, also online.

## Online censorship in Uzbekistan

In October 2021, **over 60 websites** of local and international media outlets, services and human rights organisations were inaccessible. In 2021, Uzkomnazorat included social networks TikTok, VK, Twitter, Odnoklassniki, Skype, WeChat, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Telegram, and YouTube in the register of violators of the law on personal data and restricted their work within the country. Although access to most social media platforms was restored on November 1, 2022, the responsibility for non-compliance with the Law "On Personal Data" was further toughened. Social media platforms can face severe fines and even criminal responsibility for violating national localization requirements.

## Internet shutdowns in Uzbekistan

Amidst protests in Nukus and other cities of Karakalpakstan the government reacted with a **disproportionate shutdown of fixed-line internet**, making it difficult for the Karakalpaks to locate their loved ones amidst state violence, or likewise to find the missing journalists who had been documenting the events. The shutdowns also stopped ATMs and payment services from functioning, **putting people at an additional risk because they were unable to buy food or medicines.**

## Surveillance in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan uses targeted surveillance attacks on civil society, and is named in various investigatory reports as a likely customer of several kinds of spyware companies, **including Circles, QuaDream, and Candiru.** The government continues to work with Huawei on a nationwide Safe City project, which currently features a network of 898 CCTV video surveillance systems, installed and put into operation in 142 social facilities in Tashkent.

## Recommendations

- Refrain from shutting down the internet and blocking social media and make a state pledge to refrain from imposing any unlawful restrictions on internet access and telecommunication in the future;
- Repeal or otherwise amend laws which provide for overbroad executive powers to infringe upon the right to freedom of expression and access to information – including, but not limited to the Law on Informatisation, Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan of September 5, 2018 No. 707 About measures for enhancement of information security on the world information Internet, Law on Personal Data – to bring them in line with Uzbekistan's international human rights obligations;
- Refrain from pressuring tech companies, internet service providers, telecommunications companies or others to moderate content online in contravention of the rights to free expression and access to information and ensure their compliance with their responsibilities to respect and protect human rights in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; and
- End mass surveillance programs and enact laws guaranteeing adequate privacy protections.

For more information, please contact: [un@accessnow.org](mailto:un@accessnow.org)

For direct digital security assistance for civil society actors, such as civil society groups and activists, media organizations, journalists and bloggers, and human rights defenders, please contact: [help@accessnow.org](mailto:help@accessnow.org)