

Uzbekistan's digital rights violations

UPR Pre-Session on Uzbekistan

Geneva, August 29, 2023



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ROADMAP

- 1. Recommendations from Previous Review**
- 2. Online censorship in Uzbekistan**
- 3. Internet shutdowns in Uzbekistan**
- 4. Surveillance in Uzbekistan**
- 5. Recommendations**

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

- Introduced obligation of **the owners of online resources**, including **bloggers**, to verify the accuracy of information before posting it online and/or **to immediately delete false information** published on their websites has led to **overcompliance and self-censorship**.
- In October 2021, **over 60 websites** of local and international media outlets, services and human rights organisations **were inaccessible**. Some website owners **were not formally notified** by Uzbek authorities of any access limitations.

Online censorship in Uzbekistan

- On July 2, 2021, Uzkomnazorat included social networks **TikTok, VK, Twitter, Odnoklassniki, Skype, WeChat** in the register of violators of the law on personal data and **throttled** their work within the country.
- On November 3, 2021, Uzkomnazorat **restricted access to Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Telegram, and YouTube** on the same grounds.
- Although access to most social media platforms has been restored, on November 1, 2022, the responsibility for non-compliance with the Law "On Personal Data" **was further toughened.**

Internet shutdowns in Uzbekistan

- **Internet shutdowns interfere with a range of human rights, including the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, access to information, and freedom of assembly, among many other rights.** The international community is committed to opposing internet shutdowns, and provides evidence that shutdowns are a violation of international human rights law.

Internet shutdowns in Uzbekistan

- **Internet shutdown in Karakalpakstan (June-July 2022) in response to the ongoing protests**
- Internet disruptions resulted in:
 - Impossibility to locate the loved ones amidst state violence
 - ATMs and payment services stopped from functioning, putting people at an additional risk
 - Difficulties to to confirm the exact number of people being arrested or injured amidst the demonstrations

Surveillance

- Uzbekistan is a likely customer of several kinds of spyware companies, including **Circles, Candiru, and QuaDream.**
- Authorities use fishing and cyberattacks against journalists and civil society:
 - Since 16th June 2022, targeted cyber-attacks have been carried out against **Asiaterra**, an independent online media outlet, making its website unavailable for users.

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.
- **End unlawful surveillance programs** and enact laws guaranteeing adequate privacy protections.

Thank you!

For more information, please contact: un@accessnow.org

Need help?

Contact the Access Now Digital Security Helpline:

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