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Iranian Internet Infrastructure and Policy Report

A Small Media monthly report bringing you all the latest news on internet policy and online censorship direct from Iran.

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— Introduction —

In late October, **controversy erupted** when Telegram’s Russian founder Pavel Durov claimed that Iran’s ICT Ministry had requested “spying and censorship tools” from the company. When Durov refused, Telegram was blocked in Iran.

As this episode demonstrates, the Iranian government has minimal control over foreign social media companies. Yet the government may have an easier time when it comes to domestic platforms. In this month’s report, we take a look at the terms and conditions that Iranian social networks require users to agree to, and how they relate to Iranian media law.

We’ll also cover the dispute over Telegram filtering, renewed criticism of the Supreme Council of Cyberspace, and the announcement that Iranians can start shopping at online retailers like Amazon, Ebay, and Alibaba.

1

Terms and Conditions of Iranian Services

Iran's social media ecosystem features a number of **copycat platforms** that look suspiciously similar to their Western counterparts. Iran has its own version of Facebook, Youtube, and Instagram, and officials are constantly trying to encourage Iranians to opt for the domestic platforms.

Yet despite the government's best efforts, users have been less than enamored with Iranian social networks. The founder of Facenama, an Iranian version of Facebook, **announced** in April 2014 that the social network had 1.2 million users, whereas culture minister Ali Jannati **estimated** in January 2015 that Facebook has 5.4 million Iranian users.

One of the reasons Iranians haven't fully embraced domestic social networks could be related to the perception that these networks are not secure. In a **survey** of over 2000 Iranian internet users we conducted in August 2015, over 40% of respondents said that they felt "not at all secure" when using Iranian social networks, compared to 25% who felt the same way using foreign social networks. Only 16% of respondents reported feeling either "very secure" or "somewhat secure" using Iranian social networks, compared to 40% for foreign social networks.

To get a better sense of why Iranian users might feel this way about domestic social networks, we took a look at the terms and conditions these networks require users to accept. Some of the more interesting and important terms are listed below, followed by a discussion of what they might mean for users.

Cloob.com (Similar to Facebook. Launched in 2004)

- Users can use a pseudonym although they cannot use the names of public officials or organisations in their profiles.
- Users cannot use sensitive and swear words.
- Users cannot share sensitive and secret information, pornography, racism and hatred.
- Users cannot discuss controversial political topics.
- Users must obey Iran's Cyber Crime Law on top of Cloob's Terms and Conditions.

Facenama (Similar to Facebook. Launched in 2011)

- Users cannot upload a profile picture with an "inappropriate" hijab.
- Users cannot argue with each other.
- Users cannot use Facenama to arrange any meeting in the offline world and if they do, all of their details will share with the Iranian authorities.
- Users must obey Iran's Cyber Crime Law in top of Facenama's terms and Conditions.
- Users can ONLY promote Islam and advertising of other religions is forbidden.

Aparat (Similar to YouTube. Launched in 2011)

- Users cannot upload videos which insult 'political' figures.
- Users cannot upload videos which cause political uprisings.

Lenzor (Similar to Instagram. Launched in 2014)

- Users cannot upload images which are against the law of the Islamic Republic.

Parsijoo (An Iranian search engine. Launched in 2010)

- No terms and conditions are available.

Sibche (An Iranian App Store. Launched in 2011)

- Users must comply with the laws of the Islamic Republic.

Mail.Iran.ir (An Iranian email service)

- Users must use the email service for legal goals and based on Iran's law.
- Users must confirm they keep backup of their data and Iran Mail does not have any responsibility for lost or damaged data, nor does Iran Mail guarantee that lost data can be recovered.

ChMail.ir (An Iranian email service)

- Same as mail.iran.ir.

DISCUSSION

Speech Restrictions

One of the more common conditions imposed by Iranian social networks concerns limitations on acceptable speech. These include restrictions on broaching topics such as: pornography, swear words, racism, and religions other than Islam. This isn't especially surprising, since many of these provisions also appear in [Iran's constitution](#) and media legislation such as the Press Law and the [Cyber Crimes law](#).

However, Facenama's diktat prohibiting the promotion of *any* religion besides Islam is inconsistent with the [protected status](#) Iran's constitution affords Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism.

Data protection

Iran Mail's proviso disclaiming responsibility for lost or damaged data raises the broader question of what steps Iranian social networks take to protect users' data. One of primary concerns in this regard is how these companies will respond if the government demands access to users' data. The issue of social networks sharing data with governments is [hardly unique](#) to Iran, and always involves the potential for abuse.

This is especially worrying in the Iranian context because there do not appear to be any warrant requirements, and the authorities have a [history](#) of using social media data for surveillance. The Revolutionary Guards have [recently](#) applied this tactic to Facebook data, it's reasonable to assume that authorities would have greater access to data shared on Iranian social networks.

The Question of Enforcement

The extent to which terms and conditions are actually enforced remains unclear. With regard to restrictions on racist content, it is not difficult to find [anti-Arab](#) posts on Iranian [social networks](#) that have not been removed. One such post is titled: "[The Lizard-Eating Arab](#)".

Enforcement of Facenama's prohibition on promoting any religion besides Islam seems to be similarly patchy, as [this](#) Zoroastrian group with over 500 members makes clear.

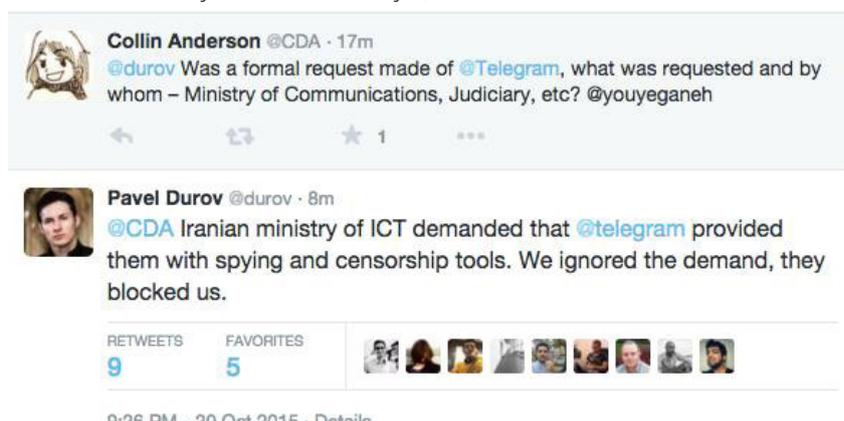
Conclusion

The terms and conditions for Iranian social networks seem to be aimed primarily at ensuring users comply with previous regulatory legislation such as the Press Law and Cyber Crimes Law. Our initial assessment suggests that terms and conditions are not always strictly enforced. Testing the extent to which various terms and conditions are enforced would be an interesting avenue for further research—one we plan to explore in a future report.

2

Content Filtering and Blocked Sites

- **October 20:** According to Telegram CEO Pavel Durov, Telegram was inaccessible for a number of hours after the company refused to share user data with Iran's ICT Ministry. Telegram claimed that the Iranian government requested Telegram to install a tool for spying on Iranians by the ICT Ministry. ([Source](#))



- **October 20:** According to Fars News Agency, internet users faced disruption and low speeds throughout the country. In response, the TCI announced that the disruption was caused by technical issues with the cable running between Iran and Turkey. ([Source](#))
- **October 28:** According to Mehr News Agency, after a week of disruption on Iran's internet, users still could not access many websites and were suffering from very slow connection speeds. Previously, ICT Minister Mahmoud Vaezi echoed the TCI's claim that there was a technical problem with the cable connecting Iran and Turkey. ([Source](#))

3

Statements from Ministries and Politicians

- **October 1:** Ebrahim Shoushtari, Director of the Interior Ministry's Security Department said government employees are not allowed to join social networks with their official titles. Shoshtari added that this ban includes people who work for the government such as governors, and district managers. Social networks such as Facebook and Twitter are blocked in Iran. However, some officials such as the Supreme Leader, President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif are active on them. ([Source](#))
- **October 1:** Assadollah Dehnad, Director of the Telecommunication Company of Iran (TCI) said the TCI is ready to provide communications infrastructure for universities and seminaries. ([Source](#))
- **October 3:** Mehdi Akhavan Behabadi, Former Secretary of the SCC and Vice President of state broadcaster Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) announced a planned collaboration with 5 operators to offer Internet Protocol television (IPTV). Also, Behabadi said running IPTV does not require a licence from the ICT Ministry or Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG). He added that IPTV will be run by one of these 5 companies in the near future. ([Source](#))
- **October 3:** Asghar Amin Aghaie, Director of TCI announced that by bundling copper cables, internet speeds will increase by between 4 Mbps and 20 Mbps. According to Aghaie, this technology is cheap and therefore a good solution for companies unable to invest in fiber optic. ([Source](#))
- **October 3:** Mohsen Bahrami, Head of the Iranian Space Agency (ISA) said they have been negotiating with Italy regarding the Mesbah Satellite which was seized due to the UN sanctions on Iran. Mesbah is a satellite which was developed in a collaboration between Iran and Italy. Since 2012, Italy declined to deliver the satellite due to international sanctions against Iran's nuclear and missile programs. In addition, Bahrami mentioned that the ISA is talking with France (not over wine, [presumably](#)) about receiving their help for the national

satellite project. (Source)

- **October 3:** Reza Ghazi, Deputy Director of Planning and Development of Tehran's Taxi Driver Organisation said they will launch card readers for taxis in Tehran. In the first phase nearly 15,000 taxis will be equipped with the debit card reader which will allow passenger to pay taxi fare by card. (Source)
- **October 3:** According to various news agencies and users in Iran, Telegram faced a series of disruptions. In response, Mohammad Reza Farneghi Zad, Head of Public Relation for the ICT Minister said the ministry has no plans to block Telegram and its problem is not coming from Iran. Zad suggested that the disruptions might be due to technical problem in Telegram's servers or their software. (Source)
- **October 3:** ICT Minister Mahmood Vaezi said the government should help private sector telecommunication companies. (Source)
- **October 3:** Seyed Mostafa Seyed Hashemi, Chairman of the Board of TCI, said Iran's parliament and government should help the TCI cover its costs, otherwise there will be no future for the company. In addition, he said the TCI has not changed its telephone tariff since 2003. (Source)
- **October 4:** Hassan Rezvani, Advisor to the Head of the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) announced that 37,000 small villages will be connected to the internet by the end of next Iranian year (March 2017). He also said Iran has invested 2.995 trillion IRR (100 million USD) for internet infrastructure in 25,000 villages since March 2015. (Source)
- **October 4:** Vaezi said Iran's national communication satellite will be in the Earth's orbit within the next 3 years. According to Vaezi, Iran doesn't yet have the required technology due to the international sanctions but he hopes that when sanctions are lifted, universities and organisations can work again with international organisations on space programs. (Source)
- **October 4:** Seyed Abolhasan Firouzabadi, Secretary of the Supreme Council of Cyberspace (SCC) said that a lack of domestically produced content on the web would cause serious damage to Iranian cyberspace. He also said the Supreme Council of Cyberspace (SCC) plans to promote Islam online. Last month, Firouzabadi was elected as Secretary of the SCC. (Source)
- **October 4:** Ali Asghar Amidian, a Deputy ICT Minister, announced there will be a new satellite operator in the near future. He said satellite operators can provide telecommunications services to

banks or the Telecommunication Infrastructure Company (TIC) from earth's orbit. According to Amidian, Iran currently is working on reviewing its regulations. ([Source](#))

- **October 4:** Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi seeks a revolution for the “Islamisation” of cyberspace. Makarem Shirazi was talking to Seyed Abolhasan Firouzabadi, Secretary of SCC. In addition he said that a lack of Islamic content in cyberspace would encourage people to consume Western content, which is undesirable as the West does not share Iran’s ‘red lines’ in their regulation of online content. In addition, Makarem Shirazi added that the misuse of technology causes many social maladies such as divorce and prostitution. ([Source](#))
- **October 4:** Alireza Yari, Secretary of the Strategic Council of [National Search Engines](#) announced that a new domestic system for rating and monitoring web services (similar to services like Alexa and ComScore) will be launched. In recent years, Iran has tried to launch domestic versions of most popular foreign services and websites such as Facebook, Google, and Instagram. Small Media has published [a comprehensive report](#) about Iran’s “copycat” social networks. ([Source](#))
- **October 4:** Nasrollah Jahangard, a Deputy ICT Minister, said Iran has hosted over 50 Startup Weekend events in the last 2 years. In addition, he discussed a series of important events which are listed below:



- Iran has improved its mobile networks and launched a 3G network.
- The number of domestic mobile apps has increased from 5,000 to 40,000
- The telecommunications market comprises 2.5% of Iran’s Gross National Production (GNP). The telecoms market is valued at 25,000 Billion IRR (834 million USD), and is predicted to increase to 60,000 billion IRR (2 billion USD) by the end of 2021.
- Iran plans to increase the number of startups in the country to 20,000. The deadline for this target is not clear. ([Source](#))

- **October 5:** Vaezi appointed Farhad Moarefi to the Telecommunication Infrastructure Company’s (TIC) Board. Before him, Kamal Mohammadpour was member of the board but he resigned. Moarefi was previously financial director of the TIC. ([Source](#))
- **October 5:** Ahmad Motamedi, ICT Minister under former President Mohammad Khatami said communication tariffs must change, otherwise the telecommunications industry would not be profitable

and there would be no interest in investment in telecom companies. Motamedi added that the tariff for landline telephone service has not changed since 2003. He also mentioned that communication infrastructure in cities dominated by the TCI and other private companies cannot function effectively, or develop further without the TCI permission. (Source)

- **October 5:** Gholamreza Najari, Board Member of the Iran Post Company announced that 3,000 villages will be equipped with smart mailboxes. Najari said the new smart mailbox will notify the nearest post office when mail arrives for collection. They are also equipped with ATMs. (Source)
- **October 6:** Seyed Hadi Sajadi, Deputy of Director of the Information Technology Organisation of Iran (ITC) announced a new plan for implementation of the integrated management of information security for 4 governance institutions in the field of online security. These 4 organisations are Iran's Passive Defense Organisation (IPDO), Iran's Cyber Police (FATA), the Strategic Centre for Cyberspace Security at the President's Office and the Cyber Security Department at the ITC. Sajadi said the plan will help to avoid parallel work by these four organisations. (Source)
- **October 7:** Mohammad Ali Vaziri, faculty member of Aerospace Technology Department at Amirkabir University of Technology announced a plan for designing national advanced fighter jets and the construction of commercial aircrafts. He also said Iran plans to design commercial planes with 150 seats within the next 5 years. (Source)
- **October 7:** Manochehr Manteghi, Head of Iran's National Space Agency (INSA) said 3 agreements have been signed between the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the President's Science and Technology Office. The contracts include plans to build satellites and a satellite station. (Source)
- **October 7:** Hossein Mehri, Director of Iran's Post Company announced Iranian users can do online shopping from international online stores such as Amazon, eBay and Alibaba. He added the product will be imported and delivered by post. In addition, he announced that the **post mail service** already has 186,000 users and aims to provide one email address per family in the near future. (Source)
- **October 7:** Mahmood Khosravi, Deputy ICT Minister said Iran is aiming to increase the international internet bandwidth in the country by 16 Tbps within the next 5 years. According to Khosravi, the current bandwidth capacity is 2 Tbps and it will increase to 8 Tbps by 2017 and reach 16 Tbps by 2020. (Source)

- **October 7:** Morteza Mousavian, Head of the Digital Media and Information Technology Center (SARAMAD) said that internet penetration in Iran is 53% which means 40 million people are connected to the internet in the country, including 11 million people who are accessing the internet on their mobile devices. Mousavian believes internet penetration in Iran is higher than the global average. He also predicted that the number of users will increase to 60 million by 2025, and that users will spend 120 hours per month on the internet. Regarding Mousavian the average internet broadband connection is 21.5 Mbps and Iranians are spending 16 hours per months on average. [Freedom House's](#) recently published 2015 Freedom on the Net Report found that Iran has the world's lowest average peak connection speed, at 6 Mbps. ([Source](#))
- **October 8:** Vaezi said villages and small towns with more than 30 households will be connected to the internet by the end of next Iranian year (March 2016). Rouhani's government has promised to provide high speed internet to all villages by the end of the president's current term in office, which will be in August 2017. ([Source](#))
- **October 8:** Guardian Council (GC) Spokesman Nejatollah Ebrahimian announced that e-Voting boxes will be ready for vetting by the GC in December 2015. Previously, the Interior Ministry offered a proposal for e-Voting for Iran's next parliamentary election but it was rejected by the GC due to software and security bugs. The parliamentary elections will be held in February 2016. ([Source](#))
- **October 9:** Nasrollah Jahangard, a Deputy ICT Minister, said most internet usage in Iran comes from watching videos. Jahangard also announced that the capacity of Chapar, an Iranian email service, has been used and they are working to increase the capacity. ([Source I](#), [Source II](#))
- **October 9:** MP Gholamreza Assadollahi said he will raise the issue of (re)nationalising the Telecommunications Company of Iran (TCI) in Parliament. ([Source](#))
- **October 10:** Sajadi announced Iran plans to make a system to ensure the security of social media. According to Sajadi, the system will be the result of collaboration between the Intelligent Information Solutions Center at Sharif University of Technology and Iran's Computer Emergency Response Team ([MAHER](#)).. ([Source](#))
- **October 10:** Lotfollah Sabouhi, a Deputy Director at the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) said IRIB has no exclusive rights for voice and video content on IPTV. There has been a series of conflicts between the CRA and IRIB over rights to IPTV content. ([Source](#))
- **October 10:** Hassan Karimi, Director of the Iran Space Research Centre (ISRC) said building a domestic communication satellite and

remote sensing satellite are the Centre's top priorities. (Source)

- **October 10:** Morteza Barari, Deputy ICT Minister, said the province of Qom has produced the most Islamic online content of any Iranian city. He added that the ICT Ministry is keen to help Qom province develop computer and mobile games. (Source)
- **October 10:** Mojtaba Nasiri, Assistant Director of Planning at Iran's Post Company announced his company plans to run the first phase of the Geocoded National Address File (GNAF). According to Nasiri, Iran's Post Company will provide 10 character postcodes for geolocation in different locations across cities by the end of this Iranian year (March 2016). Nasiri said within the first phase, 38 million postcodes will be added. (Source)
- **October 11:** Vaezi said IRIB can not grant a licence for IPTV, and that only the ICT Ministry can provide a licence for IPTV and IP Media. Previously, the Deputy Head of IRIB announced that the state broadcaster is authorised to grant a licence for IPTV and they do not need to get a license from the ICT Ministry. Vaezi also said the ICT Ministry received 23 offers from International operators to join Iran's mobile market. In response to the proposal to (re)nationalise the TCI, Vaezi said the government has no plans to do so. He went on to reject the claim that the TCI does not make any profits due to the low price of services by pointing out that landline subscription used to cost 300 IRR but now costs 7,500 IRR. (Source)
- **October 11:** Amidian said the CRA is working on a mobile app which will show the amount of bandwidth offered by mobile internet packages. According to a series of news reports, many Iranians have filed complaints about their internet packages and they say the amount they buy does not match the amount they are able to use on their mobile devices. (Source)
- **October 12:** Mehri announced that Iran's Post Company will be nationalised and that 1-2 private companies will enter the postal market. He added that the value of Iran's postal market is around 60 billion IRR (1 million USD). (Source)
- **October 12:** CRA Council Member Seyed Ahmad Motamedi said that the CRA is working on a proposal to change the way that the authority makes a profit through selling internet bandwidth. According to Motamedi, the government wants to make profit by selling licenses to operators instead of selling internet bandwidth to them. (Source)
- **October 12:** SCC Chairman Firouzabadi said if Iran could manage to translate top-level domain (TLD) into Persian, this would help Iran create Persian operating systems and programming languages. Firouzabadi was speaking at the launch of the (پن.ای) TLD. (Source)

- **October 12:** Masoud Biglarian, Director of MAHER announced 4,800 government websites reported cyber attacks or hacks over the past two years. He added that they have assisted government organisations on 210 occasions with 35 specialist teams, and have identified 1,200 phishing attacks. ([Source](#))
- **October 13:** Jahangard said developing the internet without the development of the Farsi script and language on the web would be really harmful for Iran's national security. In addition, he said it is really important to have help and produce Persian content for cyberspace. ([Source](#))
- **October 14:** Mahdi Karimi, a Deputy Director at the CRA, announced Iran can provide internet in commercial airplanes and trains in the near future. He also added that they have managed to increase the number of IP addresses over the last 6 months, in what he describes as the largest improvement of capacity in recent years. ([Source](#))
- **October 14:** Bushehr Governor Mostafa Salari said villagers in Bushehr province are ranked first for online shopping. According to Salari, it is a good indicator to show the internet become more accessible for Bushehri people. Bushehr is more sparsely populated than other Iranian cities like Tehran and Esfahan. ([Source](#))
- **October 14:** Supreme Council of Cyberspace (SCC) member Ezzatollah Zarghami criticised the SCC for not holding enough meetings, saying that a month after the meeting of the SCC's members with the Supreme Leader, only one SCC meeting has taken place despite a need to discuss the development of the National Information Network (SHOMA) and online content production. Previously, some members of the SCC criticised the council for delays over its meetings. ([Source](#))
- **October 17:** Jahangard said broadband internet access in Iran is among the world's cheapest, but that the quality remains very poor; for example, the actual speed of an internet connection advertised at 2 Mbps is 100 Kbps. In addition, he said the mobile broadband price is not cheap, but rather is close to the global average. ([Source](#))

- **October 17:** Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said that Iran should facilitate access to social media for Iranians. Rouhani was speaking to the SCC. (Source)



- **October 18:** The ICT Minister published a series of statistics on mobile usage that cover the period of time ending in May 2015. The highlighted points are listed in [Table 1]. (Source)

[Table 1] - Mobile Usage in Iran (All numbers in millions) (a) The Mobile Telecommunication Company

	Total	MTC ^a	MTN Irancell	RighTel
Mobile SIM cards	135	63	67.5	5
Pay As You Go SIM cards	116.7	45.5	66.8	4.8
Contract SIM cards	18.4	17.5	0.7	0.2
Active SIM cards	70.8	41	28.5	1.3
Pay As You Go active SIM cards	56	26.5	28.1	1.3
Active SIM card contracts	14.8	14.5	0.4	0.035

- **October 18:** Mahdi Karimi Neyestani, Deputy Director of the TIC said that his organisations will seek help from tech companies, and use domestically-developed technology to improve Iran's communication network infrastructure. He mentioned the project aims to increase internet bandwidth by up to 4 Tbps, and SHOMA bandwidth by up to 20 Tbps. According to Neyestani, the project will be partially completed by the end of March 2017. (Source)
- **October 20:** Jafar Roshanian, Deputy Director of ISA said Iran has been negotiating with Russia, France, Italy, Japan and China to develop its aerospace program. He added that these will not necessarily be for defence-related projects. Iran's aerospace and

missile development programmes were sanctioned internationally, although restrictions have been eased as a result of the nuclear deal. (Source)

- **October 20:** Vaezi said the ICT sector should prepare for, and accelerate its activities ahead of the lifting of sanctions. He stated that international sanctions will be lifted within two months, adding that this will likely result in greater opportunities for the development of the Iranian ICT industry. (Source)
- **October 21:** Mehr News Agency published statistics about Iranian internet infrastructure development. The figures are shown in [Table 2]. (Source)

[Table 2]—Mehr News Internet Infrastructure Statistics§

	August 2014	August 2015
Iran's intranet bandwidth	1200 Gbps	2400 Gbps
Iran's internet bandwidth	143 Gbps	276 Gbps
Number of E1 link	560,000	1,335,000
Synchronous Transport Module level-1 (STM-1)	1,750 links	3,600 links
Fiber Optic Created	55,508 km	56,644 km

- **October 21:** *Gerdab*, a website belong to the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) warned that Telegram will be filtered in the near future as a result of some users' activities, including the creation of 'immoral' stickers or porn-sharing groups. Previously, Iran asked Telegram to block immoral stickers. On October 20 Telegram announced that they had received a request from Iranian officials to allow them to spy on Iranian users. (Source)
- **October 21:** Farneghi Zad denied reports that Iran's ICT Minister sought to block Telegram. In October 2015, Iranian Telegram users faced disruption using the app. Farneghi Zad was responding to a [tweet from Pavel Durov CEO of Telegram](#). Previously, the Telegram CEO accused Iranian officials to block Telegram. Farneghi Zad also added that no restrictions are placed on any social networks or mobile apps unless they violate Iran's law. (Source)
- **October 21:** In a press conference, Vaezi said that disruption on mobile phone networks was a result of ongoing maintenance work. He went on to make the following points:
 - It is important that after the lifting of sanctions, Iran negotiate with international search engines to locate their servers in the country.
 - Additionally, he said Iran should also negotiate to host a copy of a second Amsterdam Internet Exchange (ams-ix) server in Iran. [Previously](#), Iran claimed it was able to secure the rights to have

a copy of an ams-ix server hosted inside the country.

- In the third week of October, mobile users experienced problems with their mobile connection.
- Vaezi denied any involvement in the blocking of Telegram, or the request for Iranian users' data. He stated instead that the disruption was due to a technical problem with Iran's connection to the internet at three different locations.
- There have been talks between the ICT Ministry and Telegram to close down pornographic and 'immoral' groups.
- Vaezi stated that the ICT Ministry is not in charge of internet censorship. Previously, Telegram said they had received a request for access to Iranian users' data from the ICT Ministry. (Source I, Source II)
- **October 21:** In an announcement, Barari said if Iran continues on the current trends of software development, it could be one of the world's top 10 software producers by 2020. He added that Iran had a €26.6 billion market share of the ICT industry in 2012, which had risen to a current market share of €35 billion. (Source)
- **October 21:** Barari said the ICT Ministry has spent 2,000 billion IRR (66 million USD) on intelligent filtering in the past year, and that the second phase of the project has begun. In addition, he announced that the ICT Ministry has been working to secure social networks for individual people, and called upon users to switch over to Iranian social networks. (Source)
- **October 24:** Mehdi Faghihi, Director of the Communications and New Technologies Office at Islamic Parliament Research Center (IPRC) said after oil and taxation, profits from state-owned operators in Iran's ICT industry offer the third-highest source of government revenue, however he did state that the government has no plans to help the industry while it is in a state of recession. (Source)
- **October 25:** The ICT Ministers of Iran and Russia agreed to collaborate on the development of domestic social networks, search engines and data security measures. Vaezi said that Iran will receive assistance from Russian companies on the development of Iranian domestic social networks. Vaezi added that Telegram currently has 13-14 million users in Iran. (Source)
- **October 25:** Ruhollah Estiri, Director of International Business Development at Iran's Presidential Office said that large European and American ICT companies have expressed interest in entering Iran's telecoms market. He added that Iran had undertaken negotiations with companies including Microsoft, Oracle, IBM and Gemalto. Estiri said that Microsoft is keen to transfer technology to Iran and sell Iranian products under their licence. Oracle **denied** holding any

meetings with Iranian authorities. (Source)

- **October 26:** Hossein Noushabadi, a spokesman of the MCIG said that disruption on Telegram is unrelated to filtering, and this out of their authority. He added that pornographic channels had been filtered by Telegram for a short period, but they have since become available again. He warned that if Telegram cannot block these channels, then Iran will have to find another solution. (Source)
- **October 28:** Ali Mohammad Zare Bidaki, Project Manager of the domestic search engine Parsijoo announced that the latest version of Parsijoo would be launched by mid-November 2015. He added the following details:
 - This will be the fifth version of Parsijoo, updated with new features including a 'downloads' section and an online shop.
 - Users will be able to see suggestions for nearby locations and shops, and read or write reviews. Over the past year, Iran has tried to build its own version of search engines to avoid people using international search engines such as Google or Bing. (Source)
- **October 28:** The Russian search engine Yandex denied opening an office in Iran. Previously, Vaezi announced that Yandex will open an office in Tehran to assist Iran with the development of its national search engine. The ICT Ministry responded to Yandex stating that the Russian ICT Minister made the offer, and that this might explain why Yandex denied the report. (Source)
- **October 31:** The CRA released a platform for Iranian internet users to check their internet speeds. Users from 13 different internet and mobile operators can check their real internet speed. The operators are include Shatel, Asiatech, Pars Online, HiWEB, Pishgaman, TCI, Asretelecom, Sabanet, Fanava, Datak, Laser, Irancell, MobinNet. The CRA hopes that operators will provide better service to internet users as a result of the new speed monitoring platform. (Source)
- **October 31:** Vaezi said that if Telegram cannot block pornography channels, then the ICT Ministry will be happy to block Telegram. He was speaking at the launch of a new version of Parsijoo. He added that having a domestic search engine does not necessarily mean competing with international search engines such as Google. He said authorities should not scare people by saying that having a domestic search engine means blocking internationally-developed alternatives. (Source)