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<http://www.rsf.org/tajikistan-youtube-blocked-google-partly-13-06-2014,46438.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Tajikistan

Hypocritical censorship

YouTube blocked, Google partly inaccessible

13 June 2014

Many Internet users in Tajikistan [have been unable](#) to access Google's search engine and other Google services such as Gmail since yesterday. The problem is being reported above all by users of the Tcell and Megafon mobile Internet services. And most people have been unable to access the Google-owned video-sharing site YouTube since 10 June.

[According to the independent news website Asia Plus](#), the same goes for the news agency [Tojnews](#) website. The authorities have so far denied any involvement although they often censor critical news websites.

"Arbitrarily restricting access to such sites constitutes a grave violation of Tajik citizens' right to information," said Johann Bihr, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Eastern Europe and Central Asia desk.

"As the authorities usually deny any responsibility when they order the blocking of websites, their latest denials are not a sufficient response. And anyway, it is their job to guarantee the continuity of Internet access in Tajikistan."

Bihr added: *"We call for an urgent explanation by the head of the government telecommunications service, Beg Sabur, and we ask him to do what is necessary to restore access to the blocked sites without delay. The government must refrain from putting any pressure on Internet Service Providers."*

Tcell said Gmail's inaccessibility was an indirect result of the blocking of YouTube. After the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe yesterday [called](#) on the government to do everything in its power to restore access to YouTube, the telecommunications service denied any involvement in the blocking and suggested that it was due to "technical problems."

The intermittent blocking of social networks and independent news sites [has become frequent](#) in the past two years in Tajikistan. Facebook, Twitter and Vkontakte have all suffered repeatedly, as have the Tajik services of the *BBC* and *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, the news agencies [Asia Plus](#), *Ferghana* and *RIA Novosti*, and the news sites *Vesti.ru* and *Gazeta.ru*. The last blocking of YouTube was shortly before the November presidential election and lasted several months.

The blocking usually follows the posting of content that is particularly critical of President Emomali Rakhmon's autocratic government. At first, the authorities usually deny any involvement, but most of the ISPs have in the past acknowledged receiving blocking instructions from the telecommunications service, often in the form of an SMS.

Photos of anti-government graffiti on the streets of the capital appeared in Facebook on 4 June. The same day, the independent news website *Ozodagon* [reported](#) that a Facebook user had been arrested for "insulting the president."

Tajikistan is ranked 115th out of 180 countries in the [2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

Read earlier RWB releases on this subject:

- [Massive Internet censorship could add Tajikistan to "countries under surveillance"](#) (August 2012)
- [Joint letter to Tajik director of communication services, Beg Zuhurov](#) (August 2012)
- [Access to one of Tajikistan's main news sites blocked](#) (July 2012)
- [Facebook and four news websites blocked on government's orders](#) (March 2013)

- [After using civil war spectre to gag media, government urged to dialogue](#) (October 2010)
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