

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001020/26
to the Commission
Hannah Neumann (Verts/ALE)
(11 March 2026)**

Subject: Internet shutdowns in Iran during regional conflict and implications for EU digital and human rights policy

Internet blackouts have become a recurring instrument used by the Iranian authorities during periods of unrest, protests, and now armed conflict. Such shutdowns isolate the population, prevent independent reporting and increase the risk that human rights violations will remain undocumented.

At the same time, the Iranian authorities continue to expand a state-controlled national information network that allows selective connectivity for regime actors while disconnecting the broader population from the global Internet. Against this backdrop:

1. How does the Commission assess the current Internet shutdown in Iran in terms of its impact on access to information, the protection of human rights and the ability of Iranian citizens to communicate with the outside world during the ongoing regional crisis?
2. What concrete measures is the Commission taking, together with the European External Action Service, to address Internet shutdowns as a tool of repression in Iran, including through EU digital diplomacy, engagement with international partners and, where appropriate, the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime?
3. Does the Commission intend to expand EU support for circumvention tools and secure communications infrastructure and anti-censorship technologies that allow Iranian citizens to access the global Internet during shutdowns, and has it engaged with major technology companies regarding the provision of secure communication channels, in-app proxy technologies or other emergency connectivity solutions?

Submitted: 11.3.2026

**Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(28 April 2026)**

In January 2026, while brutally repressing peaceful protests, the Iranian authorities had implemented a large-scale Internet shutdown following a well-known pattern observed during the periods of unrest, that became even tighter, without precedents in terms of breadth and duration, since the beginning of the conflict with US and Israel.

In parallel, the so-called ‘anti-espionage law’ expanded Iranian authorities’ control over social media and online activity with harsh penalties for censorship circumvention.

The EU’s response has been strong, both in statements denouncing the situation and in concrete acts. In her statement on behalf of the EU condemning the crackdown, the High Representative/Vice-President also called ‘for ensuring the right of access to information, including by restoring access to the Internet for all’.

In March 2026, the Council adopted restrictive measures targeting among others the head of Tehran’s cyber police, which plays a key role in filtering the Internet, censorship, controlling the social media content and unjustly prosecuting citizens.

The EU’s commitment extends to multilateral fora: At the Human Rights Council session on 16 March 2026, the EU reiterated its call for Iranian authorities to restore all communications, including full access to the Internet, and to ensure the right of free access to information for all.

The EU recognises the Internet access needs of Iranian citizens and the sensitivities involved, especially in light of the ‘anti-espionage law’, which increased Iranian authorities’ control over social media and online activity and imposed severe penalties for censorship circumvention.

The EU will therefore consider options that prioritize the safety of beneficiaries and partners.
