



1.1.2. Criticism on social media, and online surveillance

1.1.2. Criticism on social media, and online surveillance

The de facto authorities' stance on social media has been growing stricter,¹¹⁸ with increasing restrictions.¹¹⁹ The de facto Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (MPVPV) publicly warned of 'improper' social media usage and communicated that legal action will be taken 'against pages, accounts, and networks [...] undermining religious beliefs, public morality, and societal values.'¹²⁰ Starting in mid-September 2025, the de facto authorities gradually closed down internet services in some provinces,¹²¹ and eventually, on 29 September 2025, switched off internet in the entire country for 48 hours.¹²² The shutdown of the state-controlled fibre-optic network, on which also private providers highly rely on, virtually left all Afghans without internet connectivity.¹²³ Telecommunications were also disrupted, and people could not make mobile phone calls or send SMS.¹²⁴ No official reason has been announced for the shutdown,¹²⁵ although some sources suggest that it was an attempt to crack down on 'immoral activities'.¹²⁶

The de facto authorities monitor social media¹²⁷ and target individuals who criticise them online.¹²⁸ The de facto MPVPV claim to monitor online content,¹²⁹ and the de facto General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) has reportedly been monitoring journalists, activists and social media users,¹³⁰ and has a dedicated digital surveillance unit that monitors online activities, according to Amu TV.¹³¹ The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan reported on local sources warning of the 'extensive use' of digital and in-person surveillance, including surveillance of social media, mobile-phone searches at checkpoints, and the use of informants. Media and civil society actors further told the UN Special Rapporteur that critical posts on social media might trigger 'house searches, arbitrary arrests and detention', including of family members. These measures reportedly contributed to 'a climate of fear' and self-censorship, including among Afghans abroad fearing for the safety of remaining family members.¹³² The Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD) carried out interviews with several sources operating on the ground, that told them that 'the situation in Afghanistan is becoming increasingly restrictive' making it 'difficult to report on the few freedoms or niches that still exist', and that the de facto authorities monitor 'all information and reporting' on Afghanistan closely. One interviewee told ACCORD that Afghans are afraid of expressing anything openly on social media due to the surveillance.¹³³ Rahimi explained that the de facto authorities do not have the sophisticated bureaucracy and surveillance system as, for example, China and Iran, which makes it difficult for them to

trace information from anonymous accounts. Individuals who are identified as being critics may however face serious consequences.¹³⁴ Timor Sharan, Director of Afghanistan Policy Lab, noted that not only have the Taliban engaged in online surveillance, but have also been extremely effective in penetrating society through human assets, including with informants in mosques, among neighbours and the general population. This gives the Taliban great reach and scale in terms of surveillance.¹³⁵

In May 2025, Afghanistan International reported on the de facto MPVPV arresting ‘several social media users’ for ‘illegitimate’ activities online, and outlined two cases in which TikTok content creators were arrested.¹³⁶ TikTok is prohibited in Afghanistan, but remains a popular platform among the younger generation.¹³⁷ One of the men appeared in a video published by a de facto MPVPV spokesperson ‘confessing’ that he had been detained for speaking with women during livestreams on TikTok.¹³⁸ On 27 July 2025, Amu TV reported on dozens of individuals being arrested across Afghanistan over the past month, including seven journalists, for positing ‘un-Islamic’ content on social media.¹³⁹ Afghan human rights organisation Rawadari also documented ‘numerous’ arrests in the first half of 2025 of individuals posting critical content on social media. The four examples outlined by Rawadari included local journalists and civil activists that were imprisoned for three days or longer. One individual was sentenced to six months in prison.¹⁴⁰ There were moreover reports of women working for the de facto authorities to monitor Instagram accounts and report cases of women posting photos with their face uncovered.¹⁴¹ The de facto authorities have also been reacting to critical publications of exile media by investigating journalists in Afghanistan, and targeting individuals suspected of collaborating with Afghan exile media.¹⁴²

- ¹¹⁸

Khaama Press, Crackdown on TikTok users and influencers in Afghanistan intensified, arrested for activities deemed “Unlawful”, 15 May 2025, [url](#)

- ¹¹⁹

BBC News, Social media content restricted in Afghanistan, Taliban sources confirm, 8 October 2025, [url](#)

- ¹²⁰

Afghanistan International, Taliban Monitoring Social Media, Warns Of Legal Action For ‘Improper’ Use, 12 May 2025, [url](#)

- ¹²¹

Al Jazeera, Afghanistan imposes internet blackout: What has the effect been so far?, 30 September 2025, [url](#); Reuters, Internet and cell phone services resume in Afghanistan, 2 October 2025, [url](#)

- ¹²²

UNAMA, Out of reach: The impact of telecommunications shutdowns on the Afghan people, 28 October 2025, [url](#), p. 2; TOLONews, Internet, Telecom Services Restored in Afghanistan After 48-Hour Outage, 1 October 2025, [url](#)

- [123](#)

Shabir Kabiri in: The Afghanistan Project Podcast [YouTube], Afghanistan's internet outage with Shabir Kabiri - The Afghanistan Project Podcast Ep 113, 6 October 2025, [url](#) 5:45–8:30

- [124](#)

UNAMA, Out of reach: The impact of telecommunications shutdowns on the Afghan people, 28 October 2025, [url](#), p. 2

- [125](#)

UNAMA, Out of reach: The impact of telecommunications shutdowns on the Afghan people, 28 October 2025, [url](#), p. 2

- [126](#)

Al Jazeera, Afghanistan imposes internet blackout: What has the effect been so far?, 30 September 2025, [url](#); Telegraph (The), Afghanistan's internet blackout is a glimpse of a dark future, 6 October 2025, [url](#)

- [127](#)

RSF, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#); Zan Times, Journalism in the Taliban's surveillance state, 13 June 2023, [url](#); Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre; Azizi, H., PhD Candidate, Flinders University, online interview, 9 September 2024

- [128](#)

Rahimi, H., online interview, 30 October 2025. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the Belgian and Romanian COI units.

- [129](#)

Afghanistan International, Taliban Monitoring Social Media, Warns Of Legal Action For 'Improper' Use, 12 May 2025, [url](#)

- [130](#)

Rawadari, Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report: January-June 30, 2025, August 2025, [url](#), p. 8; Amu TV, Taliban detain dozens, including journalists, over social media posts: Sources, 27 July 2025, [url](#)

- [131](#)

Amu TV, Taliban detain dozens, including journalists, over social media posts: Sources, 27 July 2025, [url](#)

- [132](#)

UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 20 February 2025, [url](#), para. 26

- [133](#)

ACCORD, Afghanistan: Report on the impact of the Taliban's information practices and legal policies, particularly on women and girls, February 2025, [url](#), pp. 8, 10

- [134](#)

Rahimi, H., online interview, 30 October 2025. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the Belgian and Romanian COI units.

- [135](#)

Sharan, T., email, 27 November 2025

- [136](#)

Afghanistan International, Taliban Arrests TikTok Users, Forces Public Apologies Over Online Content, 16 May 2025, [url](#)

- [137](#)

Afghanistan International, Taliban Arrests TikTok Users, Forces Public Apologies Over Online Content, 16 May 2025, [url](#); Khaama Press, Crackdown on TikTok users and influencers in Afghanistan intensified, arrested for activities deemed "Unlawful", 15 May 2025, [url](#)

- [138](#)

Afghanistan International, Taliban Arrests TikTok Users, Forces Public Apologies Over Online Content, 16 May 2025, [url](#)

- [139](#)

Amu TV, Taliban detain dozens, including journalists, over social media posts: Sources, 27 July 2025, [url](#)

- [140](#)

Rawadari, Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report: January-June 30, 2025, August 2025, [url](#), pp. 26-27

- [141](#)

AW, Policing Morality in Afghanistan, 17 March 2025, [url](#), p. 32

- [142](#)

HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Tramples Media Freedom, 23 October 2025, [url](#)

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu