

# Police chief slams use of social media by Iranian officials

TEHRAN, IRAN: Iranian police chief Esmaeel Ahmadi Moghaddam has criticised government officials who "cross red lines" by using banned social media networks, according to the Mehr news agency.



Iranian politicians use social media even though it is banned in Iran. One rule for politicians, another for ordinary people. Image: Bloomua [Fotolia](#)

Tehran routinely blocks access to popular websites including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as part of its efforts to stop Iranians from surfing content that is deemed as immoral or that undermines the Islamic regime.

But both Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Culture Minister Ali Janati are on Facebook and even supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is believed to have a Facebook page and a Twitter account.

The authorities also provide some private and state-owned companies with a national virtual private network (VPN) service, which gives them to access to the Internet.

"The fact that some officials have started to cross red lines gradually and enter spaces prohibited for other citizens is not a good thing. Everyone should observe the rules," said Ahmadi Moghaddam.

"By violating the law (themselves), the officials should bear in mind that their actions should not pave the way for others to violate the law," he was quoted as saying on the sidelines of a police cybercrime meeting.

Zarif regularly updates his Facebook page, where he writes in Farsi and interacts with his more than 750,000 followers. He also posts English messages on his verified Twitter account.

President Hassan Rouhani, a reputed moderate who has an account on Twitter, albeit not a personal one, promised more social freedoms during his election campaign this year.

In September, Rouhani told CNN he planned to reduce restrictions. "Within (certain) moral frameworks that we have for ourselves, we are able to access these social network sites," he said.

Judiciary spokesman Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie also insisted his department was against Facebook since he says it promotes corruption and prostitution and publishes articles against public chastity, the official IRNA news agency quoted him as saying.

Iran's civil rights record and censorship are regularly criticised by international watchdogs and Western governments.

According to official figures, about 30m people - out of a total population of 75m - in Iran use the Internet.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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