



Speaker of parliament Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf (3rd from L) and lawmakers

## Hardliners Adamant To Restrict Internet In Iran, Critics Warn

Tuesday, 09/13/2022 3 minutes

Author: Iran International Newsroom

Iran Politics Politics



A bill introduced last year in Iran's parliament to further restrict access to Internet did not get support, so the governing hardliners found an alternative way.

Mohammad Saleh **Jokar a hardliner lawmaker told the media** on Monday, that that the bill has been handed over to the Supreme Council of Cyberspace and nothing can be done about it.

Jokar, who is an IRGC general, called on other lawmakers not to follow the case any longer as "this is a job done" and that "there is nothing to be followed up about the case." He said the bill is no longer on the agenda of the Majles.

To dissuade lawmakers from following up the matter, he added: "The bill is now like a dead man who is buried. What are you looking for now?"

The Siyanat (Protection) plan is a **draft bill from June 2021** by ultra-hardliners titled "Legislation to Protect Cyberspace Users' Rights". An ad hoc parliamentary committee in February approved the outlines of the Siyanat bill which will result in **broad restrictions on social messaging platforms** and access to the global net.

Many Iranians on social media have expressed concern over the handover of the case to the Supreme Council of Cyberspace which operates under the supervision of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

Moderate website Rouydad24 quoted Mohammad Keshvari of the council as saying that the bill has been already approved and the executive bodies involved have been duly notified.

### **Former IRGC top officer and hardliner member of parliament, Mohammad Saleh Jokar**

Explaining the process lawmaker Jalal Rashidi Koochi said some of those who initiated the motion to restrict Internet access at the Majles, are also present at the Supreme Council of Cyberspace. So, when they found out that the Majles is against the bill, they took it to the council for approval.

Former lawmaker **Ali Motahari had said in a September 10 tweet**: "According to the Constitutional Law, no institution other than the parliament (Majles) is entitled to make laws." He added: "The recent resolution by the Supreme Council of Cyberspace is in fact the same as the former bill to restrict Internet access that remained inconclusive at the Majles."

Motahari pointed out that "This is some kind of legislation and therefore, it is not valid." He warned that it is time for the Majles to defend the people and its own rights."

Meanwhile, another former lawmaker, Soheila Jelodarzadeh, **said in an interview on Monday**, "What is the role of the Majles if councils are going to make laws?" She further called on lawmakers to defend the authority of the parliament.

Ms. Jelodarzadeh added that the bill to restrict Internet access was sent to the Majles several times before and it was rejected it every time. "This means that restricting Internet access is not something the people of Iran want." She further stressed that "The revolutionary Majles should uphold and safeguard the rights of the nation."

She stressed that "In the age of communication we should be moving toward



and restrict people's access to the outside world.

Earlier, in a statement released in March 2022 **The US State Department criticized Iran over its plans to tighten Internet access** and urged the government "to allow its citizens to exercise their right to freedom of expression and to freely access information." The statement also said that the so-called "User Protection Bill" aims to further limit Internet access, increasing censorship and restricting free speech online."

## Iran Protests



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