



Iranian parliament in session in 2022

Iran Considering Plans For More Intrusion Into People's Privacy

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As the Iranian parliament reviews the 7th development plan, lawmakers and legal experts say the plan further enables the government to invade people's privacy.

Khabar Online website has quoted Iranian lawyer Omid Salimi-Bani as saying that the text of one ambiguous article shows the government is planning to monitor people's lifestyle to make sure that they adhere to its Islamic standards.

The lawyer said it is up to every individual to be or not be religious. But it seems the government even wants to monitor people's shopping and travel. He likened the plan to the Big Brother in George Orwell's novel 1984. He added

that some of what the government is planning to do has been branded as "crime" in the Law Against Computer Crimes.

Salimi-Bani further said that the plan violates several articles of the Iranian Constitutional Law about citizens' privacy.

Meanwhile, Khabar Online also quoted lawmaker Jalal Rashidi Koochaki as saying "Why the government should want to know whether the people are spiritual? What is it good for? Why the government wants to monitor people's lifestyle?"

Iranian lawmaker Jalal Rashidi Koochaki

He criticized the plan's security approach where it says that "The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance should continuously monitor cultural aspects of people's life and their lifestyles in order to pave the way for research."

Koochaki reiterated that this part of the plan is an elaborate violation of people's privacy.

Another Iranian lawyer, Hamid Reza Aghababaeian told Khabar Online, "No individual or organization is allowed to invade people's privacy with the pretext of collecting information for research." He added that it violates articles 22 to 25 of the Human Rights Charter. He also said that collecting such data without permission from the court and the police and security forces is illegal.

He reminded that, based on the Iranian Penal Code, only judges are allowed to request the monitoring of people's private data.

In another development, **Iran's Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib told reporters** that his ministry is considering to intervene several judiciary cases about the people's "mental or psychological security on social media.,"

probably referring to a recent trend to label dissidents a threat to people's mental wellbeing.

Iran's Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib

Asked if he did monitor social media, Khatib said: "If I do not monitor social media, then I cannot be the Minister of Intelligence." Responding to the question whether he would allow his children and grandchildren to be active in social media on their smart phones, the minister said: "We have agreed with my children that they should only use Iranian social media platforms."

Iranian social media applications are notorious for collecting and abusing people's private data, both for commercial and government intelligence purposes.

The Islamic Republic has banned all foreign social media applications, because it is afraid of the free flow of information and the likelihood of people organizing opposition using Facebook or Twitter.

Reports this week quoted **hardliner commentator Mohammad Sadeq Kooshki** as saying that "Instagram has become a venue to recruit terrorists." Kooshki added: "Unfortunately, social media platform including Instagram are not lawful in Iran. Terrorists can contact and recruit people on social media, so, Israeli and European intelligence agents do not need to meet people face to face for recruitment."

The government has banned foreign social media platforms in Iran, however, millions of Iranians use them by circumventing government restrictions by VPN (Virtual Private Networks) also known in Iran as filter breakers.