

# Social media interrupted in Turkey after crackdown

ISTANBUL: Internet users in Turkey were on Friday experiencing severe difficulties accessing social media after the country was plunged into new turbulence by the detention of its main pro-Kurdish leaders, correspondents and a watchdog said.



The messaging service WhatsApp was not working for most of the day while users were also reporting severe problems accessing Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and other sites, AFP correspondents and internet users said.

Prime Minister Binali Yildirim did not directly confirm that blocks were in place but acknowledged that "from time to time for security reasons we can use such measures".

"These are temporary measures. Once the danger is passed, everything returns to normal," he told reporters in Istanbul in televised comments.

The problems came after 12 MPs from the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), including its co-leaders Figen Yuksekdag and Selahattin Demirtas, were detained in an unprecedented crackdown.

Turkey is regularly accused of blocking access to social media in heightened situations such as terror attacks.

The monitoring site Turkey Blocks said that Twitter, Facebook and YouTube were down in Turkey while restrictions had also been imposed on WhatsApp, Skype and Instagram.

The site, which monitors internet restrictions in Turkey, said this had been carried out by a "throttling" at Internet Service Provider (ISP) level including national providers like TTNNet and Turkcell.

"Internet restrictions are increasingly being used in Turkey to suppress media coverage of political incidents, a form of censorship deployed at short notice to prevent civil unrest," it said.

It said that while there had been restrictions on Twitter and Facebook in the past, this was the first time that popular messaging services like WhatsApp were affected.

Users in the southeast of Turkey had last week reported major difficulties in using the internet.

Many internet-savvy Turks during such times turn to Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) to subvert the restrictions on public servers and flocked to the apps as the internet troubles continued throughout the day.

However by the late evening, users were also complaining of problems accessing VPNs, in a possible sign the authorities were also moving to block some of the most popular apps.

The T24 website said that the Turkish telecommunications authority BTK had moved to restrict access to leading VPN services like Tor Project and Tunnel Bear.

There was no official confirmation of this but Tunnel Bear tweeted that it was doing all it could to help users in Turkey.

"To our friends in Turkey, you now have unlimited data to stay connected with Tunnel Bear, the internet is better when it's open," it said.

*Source: AFP*

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