October 1, 2025

The Taliban must restore internet access across Afghanistan now

Access Now and the #KeepItOn coalition unequivocally denounce the ongoing nationwide internet blackout in Afghanistan and demand that the Taliban restore internet access immediately.

We, the undersigned organizations and members of the [#KeepItOn coalition](#) — a global network of over 345 human rights organizations from 105 countries working to end internet shutdowns — urgently demand that the Taliban, as the de facto authorities, uphold its obligation to protect fundamental human rights guaranteed by international human rights standards.

According to [evidence](#) documented by an internet connectivity monitoring organization, IODA, the nationwide internet blackout went into force on September 29, 2025, at around 12:30 am UTC (17:00 local time). The disruption aligned with earlier reports by [TOLO News](#) that a nationwide shutdown was imminent. Although mobile internet connections were not impacted during Monday's blackout, data from Cloudflare Radar today [shows](#) that the entire country is currently cut off from the digital grid, with internet traffic dropping to zero at the national level.

Yesterday's shutdown is an escalation by the de facto authorities to widen and tighten their censorship in Afghanistan when they shut down fibre optic (Wi-Fi) internet across at least 15 provinces, including Kunduz, Badakhshan, Baghlan, and Takhar, earlier this month to "prevent immorality." This is not the first time the Taliban has imposed shutdowns to curtail human rights. Since they came into power in 2021, they have [enforced](#) four internet shutdowns to curb information flow and restrict fundamental rights.

These measures are part of a broader campaign to silence dissent, curb criticism, and control what people in Afghanistan see and say online. In 2024 and early 2025, the Taliban's supreme leader sought a clerical ruling to [ban smartphones outright](#); amid opposition from within the Taliban ranks and supporters, the plan stalled. The regime has also been seeking to curb social media. In 2023, the Ministry of Information and Culture [announced](#) that YouTube channel operators must obtain a license, post a financial guarantee and pay fees before they can operate. Senior officials in the finance and economy ministries reportedly warned that severing high-speed internet would cripple government functions and the economy. [Reports](#) suggest that only government offices and diplomats may receive

limited access via a new state-controlled provider, while ordinary people in the country will need special permits to go online, further entrenching surveillance and deepening inequality.

The blackout has cut off a vital lifeline for millions, deepening the situation for women's rights and humanitarian crises. People in Afghanistan rely on the internet to run businesses, receive salaries and remittances, communicate with loved ones, and access education and healthcare. For women and girls barred from most educational institutions, online classes are often the only means of learning. The shutdown has already locked thousands of students and teachers out of virtual classrooms.

Moreover, civil society and humanitarian actors are unable to coordinate a humanitarian response to the devastating earthquake that has hit the eastern region of Afghanistan. Journalists cannot report safely or verify information, undermining the public's right to know. The internet blackout is further isolating women and girls whose civil rights have been curtailed and who tend to rely heavily on internet services to earn a living, learn, and stay connected. Afghan Peace Watch warns that 40 million people are being dragged into digital darkness. Any short-term control over information will come at the expense of long-term damage to the economy, education, gender equality, and technological development.

Afghanistan's nationwide internet shutdown is an authoritarian tactic disguised as a "fight against immorality." By ignoring internal warnings about economic and social fallout, the Taliban leadership has chosen to punish an entire population for the sake of censorship and control. This blackout is incompatible with Afghanistan's international obligations and with the dignity and rights of its people.

Access Now and members of the #KeepItOn coalition call on the Taliban to immediately restore all high-speed internet connections, stop imposing blanket shutdowns, reconnect fibre-optic, Wi-Fi, and mobile networks across Afghanistan, and pledge that no further arbitrary disruptions will occur.

We urgently appeal to the international community, particularly governments, including the Freedom Online Coalition, to publicly denounce the internet blackout and support calls by rights groups for the Taliban to restore unhindered internet access across the country.

The people in Afghanistan must not be consigned to a future in digital darkness. We must act now.

Signatories:

October 1, 2025

1. Access Now
2. Activate Rights
3. African Freedom of Expression Exchange (AFEX)
4. Africa Open Data and Internet Research Foundation (AODIRF)
5. AfricTivistes
6. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
7. Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE)
8. Bolo Bhi
9. Center for Media Research - Nepal
10. Center for Media Studies and Peacebuilding (CEMESP)
11. Committee to Protect Journalists
12. Computech Institute
13. Digitally Right
14. Digital Rights Foundation
15. Digital Rights Kashmir
16. Digital Rights Watch
17. Forumvert
18. Foundation for Media Alternatives
19. Human Rights Activists (in Iran) (HRANA)
20. Human Rights Journalists Network Nigeria
21. Human Rights Myanmar
22. IFEX
23. Innovation for Change (I4C) South Asia
24. Internet Governance Tanzania Working Group (IGTWG)
25. International Press Centre (IPC)
26. Kandoo
27. KICTANet
28. Koneta Hub- South Sudan
29. Kurdish Organizations Network coalition for the International Criminal Court (KONCICC)
30. JCA-NET(Japan)
31. Jonction, Senegal
32. LastMile4D
33. Life campaign to abolish the death sentence in Kurdistan Network
34. Manushya Foundation

October 1, 2025

35. Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA)
36. Media Diversity Institute - Armenia
37. Media Rights Agenda (MRA)
38. Media Matters for Democracy, Pakistan
39. Miaan Group
40. Mirror Arts CBO
41. Myanmar Internet Project
42. Office of Civil Freedoms
43. Opening central Africa coalition
44. Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI)
45. Organization of the Justice Campaign
46. Paradigm Initiative (PIN)
47. PEN Afghanistan
48. PEN America
49. PEN International
50. Rudi International
51. Sassoufit Collective
52. Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEnet)
53. Skyline International for Human Rights (SIHR)
54. SMSWithoutBorders
55. The Afghanistan Journalists Center(AFJC)
56. The Red Flag (TRF)
57. Tech & Media Convergency (TMC)
58. Tech Global Institute
59. Ubunteam
60. Webfala Digital Skills for all Initiative
61. West African Digital Rights Defenders Coalition
62. Women Empower and Mentor All CBO (WEmpower)
63. Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)
64. YODET
65. Zaina Foundation
66. Digital Rights Nepal (DRN)

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