

## CPJ, RSF warn Iran using 83-day blackout to hide press crackdown

New York, May 21, 2026 — The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and Reporters Without Borders (RSF) are deeply alarmed by the Iranian government's ongoing nationwide internet blackout, which has [cut off journalists](#) from the outside world for 83 consecutive days. What began as an effort to [control information](#) has become a sustained assault on press freedom and a daily struggle for local reporters trying to operate inside the country.

According to [the independent internet monitor NetBlocks](#), this shutdown has now entered its 12th week, making it the [longest and most severe internet shutdown](#) ever recorded [in the country](#). CPJ and RSF warn that this digital wall has turned Iran into an information black hole, built on purpose by authorities to [hide](#) a quiet, relentless campaign to scare independent journalists into silence.

“By cutting off the internet for nearly three months, the Iranian government has created a terrifying operational vacuum where the press has been stripped of its most basic defense: public awareness,” said CPJ Regional Director Sara Qudah. “We are watching a deliberate attempt to make the harassment, threats, and arbitrary arrests of local journalists entirely invisible to the world — and in doing so, they are denying the public their fundamental right to be informed.”

For the few independent reporters and newsrooms still trying to work inside Iran, the internet freeze has made safe and accurate reporting nearly impossible. Without secure messaging platforms or reliable internet, journalists cannot safely talk to sources, double-check basic details on the ground, or send their stories to the outside world. This cutoff does not just make reporting harder; it shields authorities from scrutiny.

“The Iranian regime's information blackout is suffocating the country, its journalists, and its citizens. By cutting off the internet, surveilling what little remains of journalist's online activities, and continuing to threaten Iran's media workers, the regime is shrouding the country in obscurity, shielding itself from any accountability,” says RSF's head of the Middle East desk, Jonathan Dagher. “The Iranian public as well as the international community have the right to free, reliable, and diverse information from this country. This internet blackout is an attack against that right and must be lifted at once.”

In recent months, authorities have quietly rounded up, threatened, and summoned journalists across the [country](#), knowing that these abuses are going [unseen and unreported](#).

By locking people out of the internet, the government has turned citizens into mere onlookers in their own country, while taking away the only real protection journalists have: public awareness and international support.

The [blackout](#) has also made it incredibly difficult for international press freedom groups to see what is happening. For both CPJ and RSF, confirming arrests, checking on the safety of media workers, and documenting attacks has become harder than ever before.

This information vacuum is especially dangerous for journalists [imprisoned](#) in Iran, including Iranian-American journalist [Reza Valizadeh](#), who remains detained in Tehran's Evin Prison. With communications restricted, little is known about their conditions, health, or legal status, and international groups are unable to advocate to keep these vulnerable journalists safe.

CPJ and RSF urgently call on the Iranian authorities to:

- Immediately restore full internet access across the country and end all digital restrictions;
- Cease the threats, judicial harassment, and arbitrary detention of journalists carrying out their work;
- Immediately release all journalists imprisoned for their reporting, and allow international monitors assess the health and safety of every member of the press behind bars.

The world cannot stand by and let digital darkness be used as a cover to silence the press. CPJ and RSF call on United Nations human rights bodies and governments worldwide to hold Tehran accountable for these unprecedented violations.