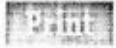


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Nisar orders crackdown on anti-army material online



By Ikram Junaidi | 5/15/2017 12:00:00 AM

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan on Sunday ordered the cybercrime wing of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to take action against those involved in an anti-army campaign on social media platforms. 'Under constitutional guidelines on freedom of expression, unwarranted criticism of security forces and other institutions responsible for the defence of the realm is not allowed. No citizen can be involved in a campaign that tarnishes the reputation and respect of the armed forces,' an interior ministry statement quoted him as saying.

'Disrespecting the Pakistan Army and its officials under the guise of freedom of expression will not be tolerated,' he said.

Online criticism of the armed forces began after Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor on May 10 announced the withdrawal of an earlier tweet, that 'rejected' the government's notification of the findings of a body set up to investigate a story published in Dawn last year.

'The tweet of April 29, 2017 was not aimed at any institution or individual,' Maj Gen Ghafoor had said at a press briefing last week.

'Since action on orders of the prime minister has already been completed by the respective ministries and divisions, the issue of Dawn leaks stands settled,' he said.

But the original tweet had already prompted a wave of criticism against the armed forces, both among political circles and on social media.

Senate Opposition Leader Aitzaz Ahsan, who belongs to the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), even went as far as to suggest that the ISPR spokesperson should have 'resigned rather than taking back his tweet'.

On social media, jokes and posts ridiculing the armed forces were also shared following the ISPR's official's press conference.

But on Sunday, the interior minister declared it was a criminal offence to target Pakistan's most revered and disciplined institution over 'vested interests', adding that those who wittingly or unwittingly participated in such an action would be liable to prosecution.

He directed the FIA to look into the issue and take strict action against anyone found involved in the malicious campaign.

'Those involved in this condemnable act should be taken to the task, irrespective of which party or profession they hail from,' the statement concluded.

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FIA launches crackdown on 'anti-army campaigners'

Print

By Amir Wasim and Zulqernain Tahir | 5/22/2017 12:00:00 AM

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has identified dozens of suspects involved in what it calls an 'organised' campaign against the country's armed forces on social media, even as opposition parties condemned the alleged 'misuse' of the cybercrime law by the government. In fact, opposition parties even pledged to fight for supporters of the ruling party, who had been rounded up during the crackdown.

'We have identified dozens of suspects involved in running an organised campaign on social media against the Pakistan Army. We have taken some of them into custody for interrogation,' an FIA official told Dawn on Sunday.

The action was ordered by Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan around a week ago after he took notice of online criticism of the armed forces following the May 10 announcement by the Inter-Services Public Relations, the military's media affairs wing, of the withdrawal of a tweet that 'rejected' the government notification of the findings of a body, set up to investigate a story published in Dawn last year.

The official said the government had asked the FIA's Counterterrorism Department (CTD) to help trace the 'real culprits' in this regard. 'The CTD is also helping us trace those running an anti-military campaign on social media,' he said.

'We have taken some suspects into custody, but at this stage we cannot disclose their identities. No FIR has been registered against anyone detained in the crackdown so far,' the official said.

He clarified that individuals would be charged only after a detailed forensic analysis of their social media accounts, because it had become common for users to employ fake identities and post in other people's name.

Forensic teams from the FIA's cybercrime wing have been working on the Facebook accounts of suspects, WhatsApp groups, blogs and websites where such a material is being uploaded.

The official clarified that FIA was 'not targeting those posting comments or images unintentionally or without any vested interest'.

Support across party lines But since the crackdown targeted social media activists linked to nearly all main political parties, the major opposition parties vowed to resist all efforts to stifle dissent through the use of state institutions.

On Saturday, an FIA team took Dr Faisal Ranjha a vocal supporter of the ruling party into custody from Kamoke near Gujranwala over suspicion of posting anti-military material on social media and shifted him to its headquarters in Islamabad.

He was detained alongside other party activists belonging to the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI).

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Sources said that all those detained had been released after questioning, but complaints had been registered against them.

PTI vice chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi met the detained activists, hailing from his party, as well as the ruling Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), on Sunday and assured them of his party's full support.

The PTI also announced that it would file a petition before the Islamabad High Court (IHC) against the 'illegal actions' being taken by the government against political workers and social media activists.

Talking to Dawn, PTI spokesperson Fawad Chaudhry said his party would stand by all political and social media activists, irrespective of political affiliations, since the party believed in the right to freedom of expression.

'The PTI will support and fight for every social media activist and political worker, be they from the PPP or the PML-N,' Mr Chaudhry declared.

He said the party would hold a demonstration outside the National Press Club today (Monday) against the FIA's actions.

Besides, sources in the PML-N said there was great resentment within the party over the government's policy to crack down on social media activists.

Some party leaders are planning to raise the issue with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif upon his return from Saudi Arabia, they said.

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has called the curbs on social media 'undemocratic, against the Constitution and counterproductive'.

PPP spokesperson Farhatullah Babar said in a statement the 'increasing misuse' by the state of the cybercrime law was a matter of serious concern and must be stopped.

He said the misuse and overuse of blanket orders, issued last week by the interior ministry to take action against social media users in the name of national security, was not acceptable.

'It is disturbing that in a short span of time nearly 1,000 cases had been registered against social media platforms. In addition, provisions of the cybercrime legislation have been arbitrarily interpreted to impose new restrictions on the right to freedom of expression in the name of national security,' he said.

'Publicly voicing concerns about the national security narrative of the state is not undermining security. On the contrary, presenting alternate opinions strengthens national security and should be welcomed,' he said.

In his orders, the interior minister had stated that 'disrespecting the Pakistan Army and its officials under the guise of freedom of expression will not be tolerated'.

He had ordered strict action against anyone found involved in the malicious campaign, 'irrespective of which party or profession they hail from'.

Soon after the minister's directive, the FIA swung into action and detained a number of suspected people for their alleged involvement in criticising the armed forces through social media networks like Twitter and Facebook. However, an FIA official said that its cybercrime wing needed modern equipment to deal with such of fences.

'There is also a need to set up a special tribunal to exclusively hear cases related to cybercrime. International linkages for information-sharing regarding cyber security should be established and international covenants and agreements for cooperation in combating cybercrime should be signed. Procurement strategies for secure and resilient hardware and software products should be developed to deal with the issue,' the official said, adding the interior ministry would have to pay attention in this regard.

Journalist 'harassed' Meanwhile, a working journalist claimed on Sunday that the FIA had been harassing him and decided to approach the Islamabad High Court for relief. Taha Siddiqui, who works for a number of foreign media outlets, will file a case before the court on Monday through his counsel Asma Jahangir.

In his petition, Mr Siddiqui states he received a phone call on Thursday evening from someone who identified himself as Noman Bodla, a deputy director in the FIA's Counterterrorism Department, and asked him to appear before the agency.

Mr Siddiqui claimed the FIA officer responded vaguely and gave no details when asked what this was in connection with but hinted that the interrogation would be about his professional work. He said his name was on a list that was circulating on social media and that he felt harassed, intimidated and unable to continue his professional duties.

When Dawn contacted the phone number (from which the call was received) provided in the petition, the person on the other end confirmed that he was, indeed, FIA's Noman Bodla.

However, the official did not share what charges the journalist is facing.

'It is the right of every individual to approach the courts. If the journalist in question is going to court, let him go.

We will present our stance before the court,' he said.

[TOP]

Opposition protests social media crackdown



Dawn Report | 5/23/2017 12:00:00 AM

KARACHI: A countrywide crackdown against social media activists gathered steam as another supporter of the ruling party was reportedly picked up for questioning by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).

On Monday, Umair Talat was reportedly picked up from Gujranwala and brought to the agency's headquarters in Islamabad.

The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, meanwhile, continued to protest the government's crackdown, even as the party's offices in Peshawar were ransacked on Monday.

Unidentified individuals allegedly broke into a private office of the head of the party's provincial social media team and made off with some computers and cameras.

Since the alleged break-in coincided with the FIA action against social media activists, the agency was suspected of involvement, but it denied taking any such action.

Furgan Kakakhel, a PTI social media activist, told Dawn that when he came to his office after the two-day weekend, he discovered that two DSLR Cameras, some memory cards and USB sticks were missing.

While he did not assign blame to anyone, he pointed out that the intruders had not touched other desks in the office, while his table had been thoroughly searched and different items were lying scattered.

Mr Kakakhel said he had lodged a complaint with local police, adding that some officials had visited his office to look into the occurrence and assured him that they would try to trace the culprits. Following the incident, the PTI social media team issued a statement condemning the break-in and demanded action against the culprits.

Protests Despite this, the party persisted in its opposition to the FIA crackdown and held protests in Karachi and Islamabad to condemn the arrests of activists from across party lines.

Leading a protest outside the Karachi Press Club, PTI MNA Asad Umar said that while social media had enabled every citizen to convey their messages across the world, the government had tried to gag the party by initiating action and arresting social media workers.

The participants, who including large number of women, were holding placards and banners with slogans against the government.

Mr Umar condemned the arrests and harassment of social media workers, saying that the FIA, which had been asleep for months, was harassing the government's political opponents in the name of protecting the army's prestige. He claimed that Nawaz Sharif wanted to break the party's backbone, the social media team. 'The government is victimising its opponents and PTI workers, he said, adding that

B-2.

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their workers were patriotic citizens and had no link with any anti-army propaganda.

At a similar protest, held outside the National Press Club in Islamabad, PTI leaders alleged that Maryam Nawaz Sharif's media cell was spreading false information through fakeids, which was tarnishing the country's image.

Journalist moves IHC Also on Monday, journalist Taha Siddiqui moved the Islamabad High Court against his alleged harassment by FIA. According to the petition, submitted through his counsel Asma Jahangir, Mr Siddiqui received a phone call from FIA Counter Terrorism official Noman Bodla on May 18, 2017. The caller asked Mr Siddiqui to appear before him at the FIA Headquarters for an interrogation and hinted it concerned his professional work.

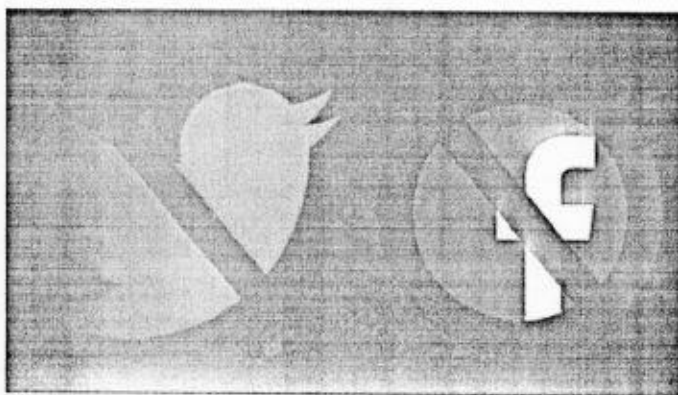
The petition alleged that the FIA official spoke to the journalist in a threatening manner, adding that since the phone call, the complainant had noticed plainclothes individuals had been conspicuously pointing at his house and asked the court to restrain the FIA from harassing him. The case will be taken up today (Tuesday).

[\[TOP\]](#)

Mind your hashtags

Zahid Gishkori May 28, 2017 [Leave a comment](#)

Arbitrary and whimsical, the FIA's drive to curb social media is hurting democracy and peoples' right to freedom of expression



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The crackdown against social media users is further blighting Pakistan's freedom of expression. The Counter Terrorism Department for the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) is muscling down on social media users, especially those critiquing the powerful military when, on the other hand, hundreds of web pages spreading extremism are allowed to flourish.

The official crackdown was conducted on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's orders, said Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan in a press conference last week. He also confusingly said, "there is no restriction on social media but there will be lines drawn and social media will be monitored".

However, all it has achieved so far is unrest among political activists who regularly use social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. It has also invited outrage from rights' activists, citing the onslaught as a restriction on freedom of expression.

Last week the FIA, the country's top authority that counters cyber-crimes, questioned more than four dozen social media users for allegedly criticising the military and judiciary. Many of them are still in the custody of investigators.

The context is that at the start of this year, about half a dozen bloggers and activists mysteriously disappeared within 24 hours. Weeks later, all of them returned home but there is still no clarity about who picked them up, why and what happened under captivity.

Columnists



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Sarwat Ali

A book exploring the artist

SPECIAL REPORT



HIGHLIGHTS



Fata's new act
May 28, 2017

Many critics pointed fingers at the Inter-Services Intelligence, the military's spy agency; meanwhile pro-army media houses reported that the disappeared activists and bloggers were accused of spreading blasphemous content online. The bloggers later denied the accusations and Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan also exonerated them.

The political situation in the country grew more complicated after an alleged deal between the civilian government and the army to settle a row over a security issue went sour.

Now the federal government has ordered a large-scale crackdown against those allegedly posting anti-state content online, and maligning state's institutions.

Although political activists are being checked on social media, extremists spreading their ideology through cyber space are hardly confronted. The lethal Islamic State, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JUA) and Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) are all running their recruitment campaigns on social media.

"Some two dozen people suspected of publishing hate materials are in our custody and it also includes eight activists of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)," says a senior FIA official, continuing, "Social media activists who created fake online [Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc] accounts just to malign Pakistan, its institutions or to take revenge on other people or settle their political scores are to face tougher action through FIA prosecutors".


Some ten million people are currently using social media sites in the country, he further adds.


The News on Sunday spoke to six FIA officials and all wished to remain anonymous.


Kamran Rehmat, a former newspaper editor and political analyst, thinks the whip is just an appeasement gimmick, but one that does Nawaz Sharif's government no credit. "Sharif 3.0 is obviously desperate to complete his term any which way, even if that means one more compromise in its collection of embarrassments. This appears to be a calibrated move to appease the security establishment, which is smarting from the apparent loss of face in the tweet saga".

"But for an elected government to hurt democracy like this is a betrayal of public trust and its bounden duty to protect all freedoms enshrined in the constitution. Driven by self-preservation, these actions are also hurting Pakistan's image globally," Rehmat adds.


The FIA investigators questioned eight workers of the PTI and PML-N, who were accused of posting hate material against the military. Four people were questioned by investigators who allegedly posted blasphemous content on social media. The investigation team also quizzed three offenders accused of maligning Chief Justice of Pakistan and Justice Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui of Islamabad High Court.


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May 28, 2017


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
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A portrait of Khalid Iqbal

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Chaudhry Nisar: "There is no restriction on social media but lines will be drawn and social media monitored."

The FIA Islamabad office, with help from Pakistan Telecommunication Association (PTA) requested social networking sites to preserve data of approximately 1,000 social media accounts in past six months. Offenders who create fake profiles on Facebook and Twitter may face terrorism, anti-state and harassment charges. "The PTA also requested social media sites either to restrict or block around 400 accounts of Facebook and Twitter with around a dozen websites which were spreading unwanted content against the state," adds FIA officials.

The FIA teams have received more than 11,053 complaints in the past 15 months, official data exclusively obtained by TNS revealed. Around 20,180 complaints were sent to FIA regional offices by citizens between 2011 and April 2017. Over 4,501 inquiries were ordered by FIA investigators regarding 20,180 complaints, and around 1,200 inquiries were filed in past 16 months. The data further revealed that some 879 cases were filed by the investigators against the offenders and that some 240 social media activists faced cases in the past 15 months.

Although political activists are being checked on social media, extremists spreading their ideology through cyber space are hardly confronted. The lethal Islamic State, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JUA) and Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) are all running their recruitment campaigns on social media. Noreen Leghari, a medical student, was the Islamic State's latest catch which has previously allured hundreds of activists to join hands with their extremist group in Syria and Iraq.

The government did not block such sites, in fact activists of these banned outfits enjoy free space on these same social media sites. A key part of National Action Plan stated that the glorification of banned outfits and terrorists would be curbed but terrorists like Ehsanullah Ehsan who once served the TTP and then the JUA were given airtime by mainstream media. The PTA, Pemra and FIA have the capacity to block such sites but no serious action was taken against these hatemongers.

The Interior Minister remains in denial, as usual. His only focus is the social media users who are allegedly anti-army. "We'll not tolerate those degrading our institutions on social media," he told the media.

The crackdown on social media activists, critics say, was creating a climate of fear and promoting self-censorship among other social media users. This is contrary to democratic principles. "Free speech is beauty of democracy as both freedom of expression and democracy go hand-in-hand. The government is curbing peoples' rights by targeting critics. It should start crackdown against extremists sites rather than threaten critics," says PTI leader Jahangir Tareen.

He adds that his party's activists are being picked up by FIA because the PML-N government wants to suppress their critics.

The FIA teams were receiving some 40 to 50 complaints daily and it has become difficult for investigators to address them quickly. There are talks about the activation of a new cyber

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terrorism wing under the new cyber crime laws.

"The agency faces a capacity problem since it cannot handle the rising number of complaints on a daily basis," says Muhammad Amlish, Director General FIA. Although he did not discuss the current issue in detail, he did say, "We also want some amendments in newly passed laws such as the Protection of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016, in order to nip cyber crimes."

Around 210 cases have been filed under PECA 2016 in different courts but till now only one case was decided by a local court last week. The local court awarded an 18-month imprisonment with fine of Rs200,000 to a man who created a fake Facebook account of a girl in Lahore. "The nature of cyber crime cases range from revenge pornography to blasphemous content," says the FIA investigator.

But even as the government is catching a few real criminals, it is rapidly earning criticism for its crackdown. Nighat Dad of Digital Rights Foundation, an advocacy NGO focusing on digital governance, says: "The crackdown on social media activists is creating a climate of fear and promoting self-censorship among other social media users which is a contrary to the principles of democracy. Social media is a space for people, exercising their freedom of expression and access to opinion by sharing news, being critical to state actions etc."

She further adds that the state needs to explain how they define criticism, defamation, hate speech and what laws they are using to crack down on social media activists.

Senator Farhatullah Babar says the government should not be allowed to wield power arbitrarily or whimsically. "The freedom of expression is increasingly attacked by both state and non-state actors on various pretexts. Silencing critics through FIA's harassment must be stopped. This dangerous trend must be resisted by supporters of freedom of expression."

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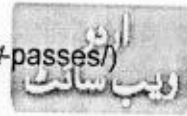
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FIA to quiz 200 social media activists over anti-army posts

May 20, 2017 By: Khan Zahid Published in Pakistan (<https://www.samaa.tv/pakistan/>)
Be the first to comment! (<https://www.samaa.tv/pakistan/2017/05/fia-to-question-200-social-media-activists-over-anti-army-posts/#respond>)



ISLAMABAD: The federal government plans to step up its crackdown on social media activists over purported criticism against Pakistan army despite strong criticism by opposition parties and human rights groups.

According to a government's source, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has

finalized a list of 200 people who are likely to be questioned or detained for their alleged anti-army tweets, posts on popular social media forums.

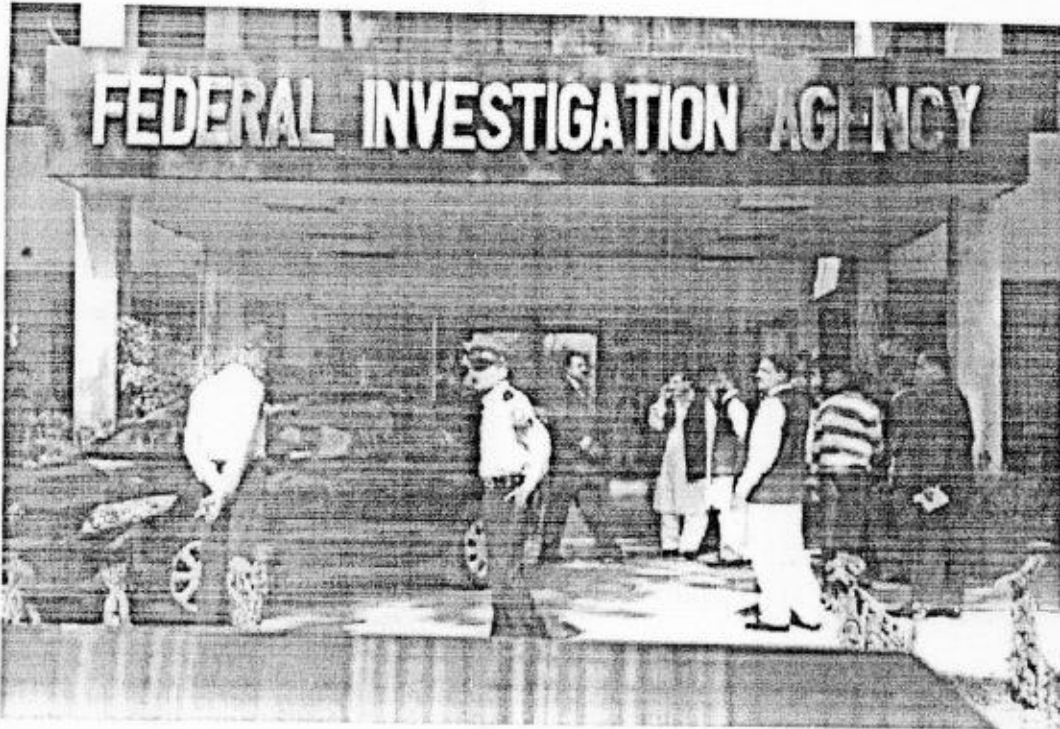
Sr. No.	Name of Individuals / Accounts	Facebook/twitter acct details
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3	Khadim Abdul Qadir	khadim.abdulqadir.5 (Fb)
4	Ibtisam Bari	ibtisam.dn.5 (Fb)
5	Badaruddin A Shaikh	badaruddin.shaikh (Fb)
6	Fifty shades of Moghul	@Uj31
7	Salar Sotanzai	@MeFixer
8	Hassan Khan	@hassan_k82
9	Shah Zaimay Khan	@zaimayX
10	Ahmed Nadeem	Ahmed Nadeem (Rhatt) facebook account
11	Owais Khan	@OwaisKhan82
12	Sadiq Raza	@SadiqRazaP
13	Atta Ullah Aram	@AttaUllahAram5
14	Enzir Faisal Ranzha	@EnzirRanzha
15	Mam Umir	@amerpriden
16	Controversial Rana	@Rmshazib
17	Aaji	@_Tanok1
18	Aam Achar	@AamAchar
19	Majid Asif	@MajidAsif
20	Taha Shakeel Siddique (Journalist)	@TahaSSiddiqui
21	Patawan Pake	Patawanpake (Fb)

45

Among those named in the list include journalists and some social media activists of the ruling PML-N, and opposition PTI.

Sources reveal that 40 people have already been grilled by the investigation agency while their laptops, mobile phones and ipads have been seized and sent for forensic evaluation.

The move comes despite Imran Khan's threat to launch street protests against the social media crackdown.

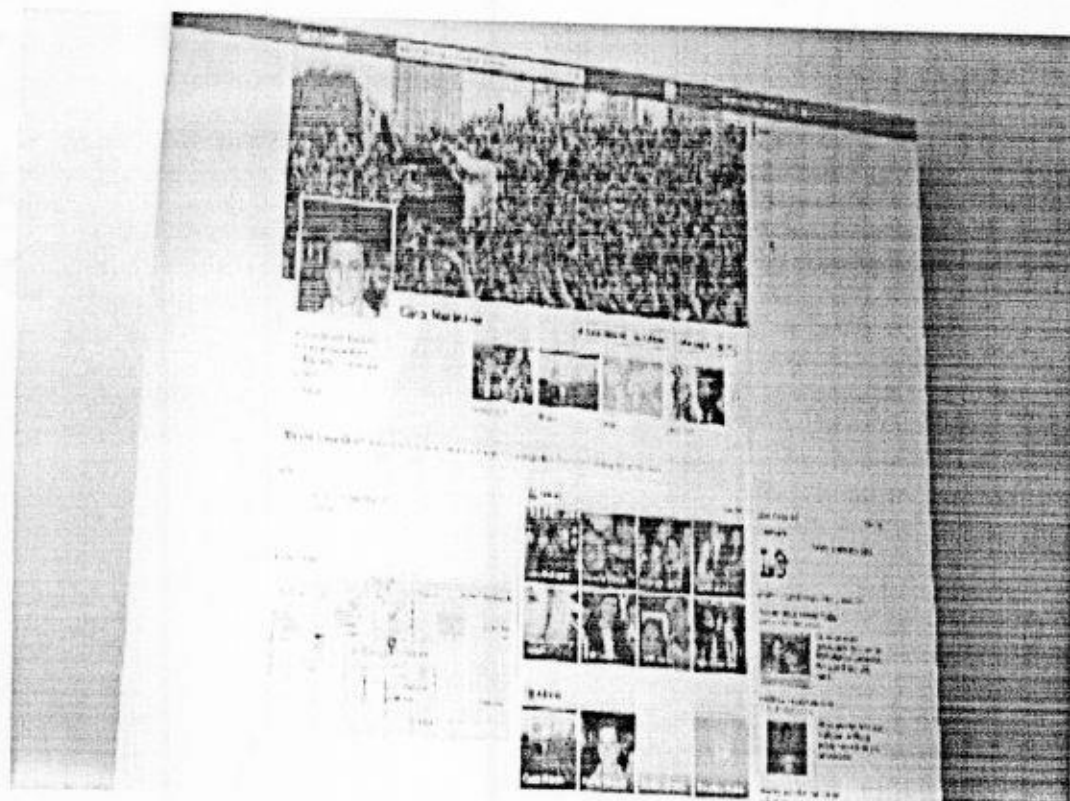


Addressing a gathering in Quetta yesterday, PTI Chairman Imran Khan he would be forced to take to the streets if the government touched his workers or banned the social media.

Salar Kakar, a PTI social media activist, was detained from Quetta and shifted to Islamabad for investigation before being released a day later.

Dr Faisal Ranjha, an active supporter of the PML-N on social media, has also reportedly been arrested by the FIA.

In a press statement yesterday, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) voiced serious alarm over arbitrary curbs on freedom of expression, a climate of intimidation and the authorities' stated intent to act against any perceived slight to the armed forces through the social media.



"HRCP notes with growing concern the prevailing climate with regard to freedom of expression. We are particularly alarmed by statements of at least two federal ministers, one of which vowed severe action under the cyber crime law and through the other the Federal Investigation Authority (FIA) was directed to proceed against those 'dishonouring' the army through the social media," the commission said.

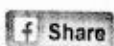
"HRCP wishes to remind the authorities that any limitations on the freedom of opinion, expression and information must be in consonance with Article 19 of the ICCPR and the constitution of Pakistan. The constitution itself states that any restriction regarding the Article 19 freedoms must be reasonable and shall only take effect if provided by law.

According to the information submitted in parliament this week, since the present government came to power, the cyber crime wing of the FIA has registered nearly 900 cases. – SAMAA



([https://www.samaa.tv/pakistan/2017/05/fia-to-question-200-social-](https://www.samaa.tv/pakistan/2017/05/fia-to-question-200-social-media-activists-over-anti-army-posts/emailpopup/)

[media-activists-over-anti-army-posts/emailpopup/](https://www.samaa.tv/pakistan/2017/05/fia-to-question-200-social-media-activists-over-anti-army-posts/emailpopup/))



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PTI activist held in first case about 'maligning forces' on social media

Print

By Zulqernain Tahir | 5/31/2017 12:00:00 AM

LAHORE: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) arrested a Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) activist in the first case in its campaign to crack down on social media users criticising the country's armed forces on different digital platforms.

The FIA's cybercrime wing arrested Adnan Afzal Qureshi in the Defence Housing Authority on Tuesday and charged him under Sections 20 and 24 of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (harming the reputation of a person and cyber stalking), and Sections 419 and 500 of the Pakistan Penal Code (impersonation and defamation).

'We arrested the PTI activist for [posting] a series of anti-military tweets and running a Facebook page containing such content. The suspect used abusive language against some military personnel and political leaders. We are interro-gating him to know whether he is part of a group that has launched an anti-military campaign or whether he is doing it on his own,' FIA investigator Rizwan Arshad told Dawn.

Mr Arshad said the suspect was an active member of the PTI from NA-125, the constituency of Railways Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique. To a question about further arrests in this regard, he said: 'We have identified more suspects and will take them into custody in the coming days,' he said.

Earlier, the FIA had interrogated over a dozen people suspected of running an anti-military campaign. They were released after the FIA could not establish anything serious against them. 'This is the first FIR in a crackdown on the anti-military campaign on social media networks,' Mr Arshad said.

The crackdown was launched two weeks ago on the orders of Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, who took notice of criticism against the armed forces following a tweet by the Inter-Services Public Relations rejecting a government notification in connection with a story published in Dawn. Since then, forensic teams of the FIA's cybercrime wing have been combing Facebook accounts, various WhatsApp groups, blogs and websites suspected of carrying such material.

Major opposition parties have vowed to resist the attempt to place curbs on social media. The PTI youth are known to be active on social media and are often accused by rival Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz of targeting the prime minister's family (on social media).

The PTI has also announced that it would petition the court against 'illegal action' taken by government agencies against its political workers and social media activists. 'We will move the court against the FIA's action against young boys [PTI activists] whose only crime is to express their opinion,' PTI leader Andleeb Abbas told Dawn.

She asked why the interior minister was silent on the issue of banned organisations using social media platforms to further their agenda, but was targeting young political activists to silence dissent. 'Instead of sending the FIA after young people exercising their right to freedom of expression, the government should assign the agency to take out criminals running huge scams [on social media],' Ms Abbas said.

adding that the PTI would provide legal assistance to Mr Qureshi.

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ORDER FOR ATTENDANCE U/S 160 Cr. P.C

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مقامی ایجنسی کے سربراہان کو
میں نے اطلاع دی ہے کہ 16-5-17

Subject:

Enquiry No. 23/17

Whereas, the undersigned is investigating the above Case / Enquiry and reportedly, you are well aware of the facts / circumstances of said Case / Enquiry. Therefore, you are directed to appear before the undersigned at Police Station FIA Counter Terrorism Wing at above mentioned address on 18-5-17 at 11:00 AM to answer such questions as put forth to you.

Non-compliance to this order is punishable under law. Therefore, your willful non-obedience of the order will render you liable for Criminal Proceedings U/S 174 PPC.

(Nauman Ashraf Bodla)
Deputy Director/CTW/FIA
Islamabad

Note: - Necessary documents / evidences may also be brought.

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Banned outfits in Pakistan operate openly on Facebook



By Jahanzaib Haque & Omer Bashir | 5/30/2017 12:00:00 AM

THEY exist in plain sight, just one search and one click away from any of Pakistan's 25 million Facebook users.

An investigation carried out by Dawn across the month of April 2017 has revealed that 41 of Pakistan's 64 banned outfits are present on Facebook in the form of hundreds of pages, groups and individual user profiles.

Their network, both interconnected and public, is a mix of Sunni and Shia sectarian or terrorism outfits, global terrorism organisations operating in Pakistan, and separatists in Balochistan and Sindh.

For the purpose of this investigation, the names of all banned outfits including acronyms and small variations in spelling were searched on Facebook to find pages, groups and user profiles that publicly 'liked' a banned outfit.

The biggest outfits on the social network, in order of size, are Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ) with 200 pages and groups, Jeay Sindh Muttahida Mahaz (JSMM) with 160, Sipah-e-Sahaba (SSP) with 148, Balochistan Students Organisation Azaad (BSO-A) with 54 and Sipah-i-Muhammad with 45.

Other banned outfits which exist on Facebook at a smaller scale include Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Tehreek-e-Taliban Swat, Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi, Jamat-ul-Ahrar, 313 Brigade, Shia outfits and a host of Baloch separatist organisations.

A closer look at activity An examination of some user profiles linked to these banned outfits indicates open support of sectarian and extremist ideology. A few of these profiles have also publicly 'liked' pages and groups related to weapons use and training.

While some of the Facebook pages and groups claim to be 'official' representatives of the outfits, others appear to be managed by members and supporters in ideological agreement.

The content shared on their forums is varied. Although there are occasional posts in the form of text or status updates, the more common updates feature photos, videos and memes shared to explain and elaborate on the outfit's ideology; provide updates on recent or ongoing events and on-ground activity; and encourage private contact and recruitment of motivated Facebook users. In general, the Facebook updates were in Urdu or Roman Urdu rather than English, suggesting the content was primarily for local consumption. A very small number were in Sindhi or Balochi, also indicating a niche target audience.

Open spread of ideology Invariably, most of the Facebook pages and groups glorify existing leaders or those killed while some banned outfits also campaign for the release of their activists or leaders.

In their Facebook updates, all banned outfits put the blame on the state, or, in the case of outfits focused on Kashmir, on India. In rare cases, pages and groups linked to these banned outfits share graphic

content depicting acts of violence including photos and videos of bodies.

The more organised outfits appear to have 'official' media cells sharing press releases and religious sermons or political speeches as both audio and video. Such pages and groups also share links from websites, blogs or Twitter accounts that appear to be run by members of these outfits. The content in general includes anti-state propaganda or hate speech directed at religious minorities and other members of society. Local footprint Of the pages, groups and users investigated for the purpose of this story, a majority appeared to be based in larger urban centers such as Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta.

Many banned outfits have pages and groups with their names followed by district names, inviting users to join based on locality e.g. in the case of Baloch separatists, divisions include Gwadar, Kharan, Mastung, Panjgur etc.

Others, such as sectarian outfits, are organised down to localities e.g. North Nazimabad in Karachi, or even by-election constituency e.g. NA-68. Furthermore, others were organised using terms such as 'student wing' or 'youth wing'.

Tip of the iceberg At all times, members and supporters of these banned outfits operating on Facebook have the option to shift communication from public to private. Any user linked to, or interested in a proscribed organisation can befriend and chat with like-minded users, message those operating the pages and groups or click the provided links to websites and blogs. To establish contact off Facebook, all they would need to do is use the publicly listed email addresses or local phone numbers provided by some of the outfits.

The findings of this investigation are just the tip of the iceberg however, as a far larger number of pages and groups could exist without publicly using the name of the banned organisation in order to operate in secret. Unlike the profiles examined, most Facebook users would also not leave their list of pages and groups public unless they feel they can use the social network with impunity.



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