

# [***Key ally of Pakistan's prime minister demands end to ban on social media platform X***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BV2-TV01-JC5B-G4JC-00000-00&context=1516831)

The Associated Press

April 19, 2024 Friday 9:00 AM GMT

Copyright 2024 Associated Press All Rights Reserved

**Section:** BUSINESS NEWS; INTERNATIONAL NEWS

**Length:** 431 words

**Byline:** MUNIR AHMED, Associated Press

**Dateline:** ISLAMABAD

**Body**

ISLAMABAD — An important ally of Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif demanded the government lift a two-month-old [*ban on the social media platform X*](https://apnews.com/article/pakistan-x-twitter-disruption-1f782388be6445de8e592ba1c71d045a), saying on Friday that it violates citizens' right to speech and expression.

The ban on X has been in place since February, when the party of imprisoned [*former Prime Minister Imran Khan*](https://apnews.com/hub/imran-khan) announced a nationwide protest against alleged election rigging ahead of the Feb. 8 vote that allowed Sharif to come to power.

“We demand that the ban on X, which is known as Twitter, should immediately be lifted by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to stop any further violation of human rights,” said Farhatullah Babar, a senior leader of the Pakistan People's Party. The PPP is an important member of the coalition that allowed Sharif to [*form a government*](https://apnews.com/article/pakistan-prime-minister-shehbaz-sharif-imran-khan-a6c17eacd7fc17026c41bc2d6bab97c0) in March.

Babar is known as a defender of human rights who's taken stands on civil rights and the protection of minorities during a three-decade career in ***politics***.

Sharif's government offered conflicting justifications for the ban in public statements before telling an Islamabad court that the decision to impose it had been made “in the interest of upholding national security, maintaining public order and preserving the integrity of the nation.”

Another court in Karachi asked the government to reverse the ban on Wednesday after petitions from human rights defenders.

Millions of people use X in Pakistan, and Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party relies on it especially heavily. The PTI says the restrictions were meant to suppress its voice on social media.

Many people have been using VPN software to bypass the government's block on X, and access to the platform has been intermittently restored, but human rights activists want a total end to the ban.

Babar made his comments a day after X said that it was in contact with Pakistan to understand its concerns.

Pakistan has said the social media is being used to defame the country’s institutions, a phrase which is often used to refer to the military and judiciary. Both have come under criticism from Khan, who was ousted in a no-confidence vote in April 2022.

Babar said there was a perception that such institutions were behind the ban.

“There are certain powerful forces in Pakistan, and you know there is a perception here that these forces are sitting in the driving seat and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is in the back seat, and we request the prime minister to dispel this impression by lifting the ban on X with whatever power he has now,” Babar told the Associated Press

Washington has also urged Pakistan to lift restrictions on X.

**Load-Date:** April 19, 2024

**End of Document**