

Iran General License D-2 (United States)

Updating regulatory frameworks on sanctions to facilitate access to anti-censorship tools

Relevant commitment: Refrain from blocking or degrading access to lawful content, services, and applications on the Internet, consistent with principles of Net Neutrality subject to applicable law, including international human rights law.

Type of the initiative: Legislation

Stakeholder Group: Government

Launch/adoption: 2022 - Now

Goals

The expansion of **Iran General License (GL) D-2** by the U.S. Treasury Department aims to empower Iranian civil society by providing access to secure communication tools, circumventing government censorship, and protecting digital rights. This initiative reflects a response to the Iranian government's increasing use of internet shutdowns and content blocking, which restrict free expression and access to information. The program's primary goal is to ensure Iranians can securely communicate, organise, and share information, particularly during protests and unrest.

By updating sanctions guidance to align with modern technological needs, the initiative broadens the availability of tools such as social media platforms, video conferencing, and cloud services. It also supports the development of anti-censorship and anti-surveillance software, enabling Iranians to bypass domestic restrictions. Furthermore, the program seeks to promote the global internet's integrity by addressing the risks of centralised control mechanisms like Iran's National Information Network and technologies that monitor, redirect, or alter internet traffic.

Description

Iran General License D-2 enhances the range of internet-related services available to Iranians by adapting export controls on U.S. technology to support human rights and digital freedom. Key aspects of the updated guidance include:

1. **Expanded Authorization for Digital Tools:** The license includes provisions for social media, collaboration platforms, video conferencing, and cloud-based services, as well as anti-censorship tools such as Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), anti-tracking software, and secure communication platforms. These tools allow Iranians to bypass content blocking and ensure privacy.
2. **Flexibility for Local Innovation:** Iranian developers can now obtain special licenses to create homegrown anti-surveillance and anti-censorship applications. This supports locally tailored solutions to counter government monitoring and censorship technologies, such as deep packet inspection.
3. **Simplified Access to Secure Communication:** Removing "personal use" restrictions simplifies compliance for U.S. companies, enabling broader and faster access to essential communication tools.

The license expansion also highlights the strategic importance of aligning technical and policy decisions to uphold human rights in a globally interconnected internet. It demonstrates the potential for export control policies to mitigate the collateral damage of geopolitical tensions on civil society, offering tools that support secure communication and freedom of expression.

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