

Internet Censorship in Turkey and Online Video

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- Through the history, mass media has been the target of ruling authorities. These controlling mechanisms appear today through the practices of censorship as attached to the Internet of the modern world.



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- Stretched between Asia and Europe, Turkey amalgamates the cultural, historical, and sociopolitical diversity of two continents. The government has implemented legal and institutional reforms driven by the country's ambitions to become a European Union member state, while at the same time demonstrating its high sensitivity to defamation and other “inappropriate” online content, which has resulted in the closure of a number of local and international Web sites.



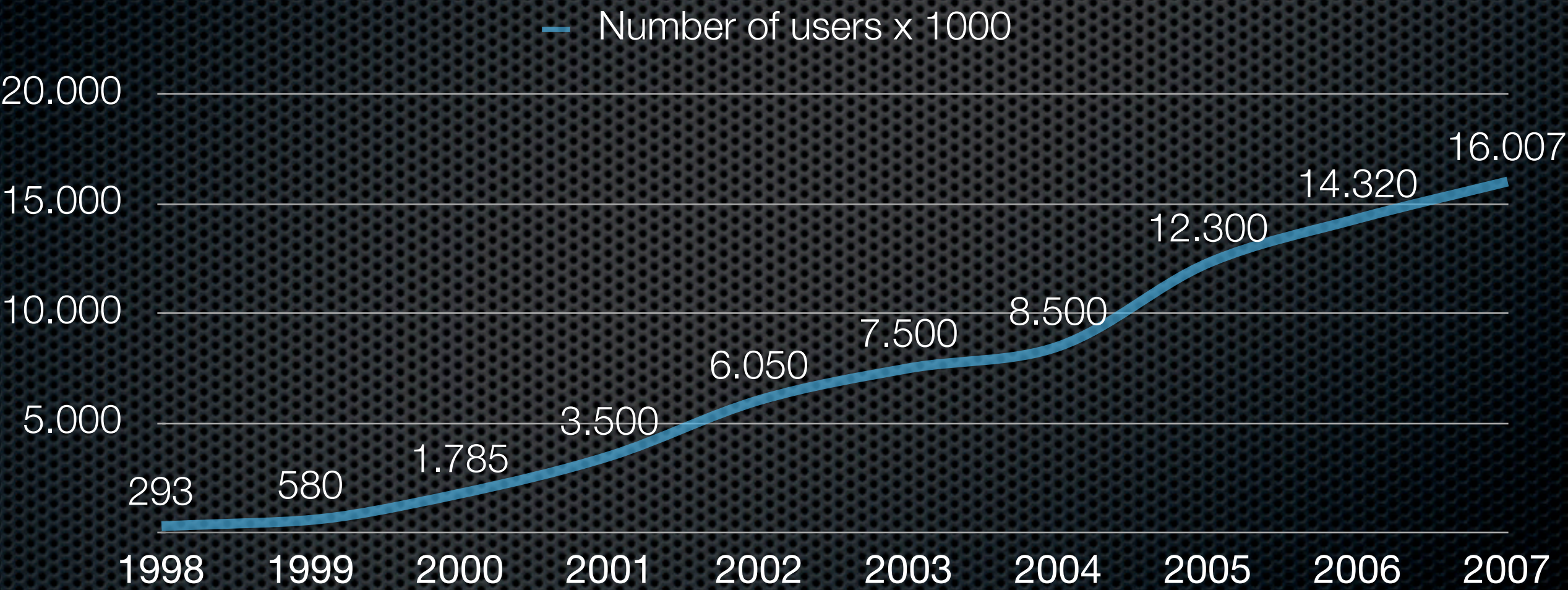
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- In terms of Internet content regulation, unlike many other countries, the Turkish government adopted a hands-off approach to the regulation of the Internet until 2001. At that time there were no specific laws regulating the Internet. It was thought that the general legal system regulating speech related crimes was adequate.

In May 2002, the Parliament approved the Bill Amending the Supreme Board of Radio and Television and Press Code (Law No. 4676). This Law included provisions that would subject the Internet to restrictive press legislation in Turkey.

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Number of Internet Users in Turkey (1998-2007)



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- Until 2005, the Internet in Turkey was a largely free medium. However, in 2005 this situation quickly changed when laws were introduced to restrict Internet content.

Widespread use of the Internet and growing concerns about the uncontrolled amount of sensitive content available online pushed authorities to adopt a special law on the Internet. The Law on the Internet (or the Regulation of Broadcasts via Internet and Prevention of Crimes Committed Through such Broadcasts) No. 5651 was passed by the parliament on May 4, 2007.



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The remaining rulings banned access to the following types of proscribed content

1. Crimes against Atatürk (Article 8/b)
2. Prostitution
3. Providing place and opportunity for gambling
4. Sexual abuse of children
5. Encouraging people to commit suicide
6. Supplying drugs that are dangerous for health
7. Facilitation of the abuse of drugs
 - Downloading of MP3 and movies in violation of copyright laws
 - Insults against state organs and private persons
 - Crimes related to terrorism
 - Violation of trademark regulations
 - Unfair trade regulated under the Turkish Commercial Code
 - Violation of Articles 24, 25, 26, and 28 of the Constitution (freedoms of religion, expression, thought, and freedom of press)

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As a right, freedom of expression is recognized and protected by the Turkish Constitution through Article 26.

According to Article 26 “everyone has the right to express and disseminate his thought and opinion by speech, in writing or in pictures or through other media, individually or collectively.”

The Regulation of Publications on the Internet and Suppression of Crimes Committed by Means of Such Publication law is contrary to Article 26 of the Turkish Constitution.

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- Access to YouTube has been blocked from Turkey in May 2008 order by an Ankara court. The order was issued because of 10 video clips involving defamatory statements and images about the founder of the Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. These clips were deemed illegal under Law No. 5816 — ‘Crimes Against Atatürk’.



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- With the ban on YouTube, the struggle for democracy after 1980 began to experience reflexion through to the internet in Turkey.
- Over time, with the increasing number of banned sites, Internet users have started to react. Such as Sansüre Sansür (Censorship for Censorship), civil initiatives established by internet users, which are against to the internet censorship.

SANSÜRE**SANSÜR**.org

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- These initiatives, associations merged under the umbrella of a common platform in June 2010, for struggle against internet censorship in Turkey, which called Uncensored Internet Platform. Uncensored Internet Platforms first act was marching against the internet censorship.

On 17 July 2010, about 2,000 people gathered in the popular Taksim Square on Istanbul's European side to protest against restrictions on the internet.



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- YouTube access was opened on 31 October 2010, after 2.5 years banning. But, this is against the law on internet in Turkey.
- Still, over 9.000 Internet sites are blocked in Turkey. Even as some of the content that is deemed 'bad', such as child pornography, must be sanctioned, the law is unfit to achieve this. Finally the access of the blogspot is denied in Turkey, in February 2011.
- Lifting the ban on YouTube does not mean that the other video sharing sites will not ban in Turkey. In the past, video sharing websites such as metacafe, dailymotion, vimeo have been banned in Turkey, like YouTube. Access of metacafe is still denied.

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- One of the tragicomical examples that represents the gravity of the case very well is about one of my students, Onur Şentürk. He applied for the **Vimeo festival+awards 2010** competition.
- His work made it to the finals, but in the meantime Vimeo was banned in Turkey, so we were neither able to watch the video nor vote for it. Ironically his work won the best in motion graphics award.



vimeo
**FESTIVAL
+AWARDS**

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- <http://vimeo.com/13216490>

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- Banning the global video sharing sites in Turkey provided more Turkish video sharing sites to develop.

However, it's affect on impeding the global cultural interaction, and hindering the community access to their own intellectual accumulation is against the nature of Internet and it's multi-pronged damage is strictly unacceptable for the internet community in Turkey.

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- <http://vimeo.com/4596761>

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- <http://vimeo.com/4597239>

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- <http://vimeo.com/4597890>

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