

WIKI FILTERING

IRAN'S CENSORSHIP OF WIKIPEDIA

The Iranian government aggressively blocks online content with an extensive blacklist of URLs and URL keywords. Iran's digital filter prevents access to pages on one of the Internet's most open platforms: Wikipedia. Using proxy servers, we identified every Persian-language Wikipedia article blocked inside Iran and gained insight to the sensitivities of state censors.

TOP 3 MOST CENSORED TOPICS

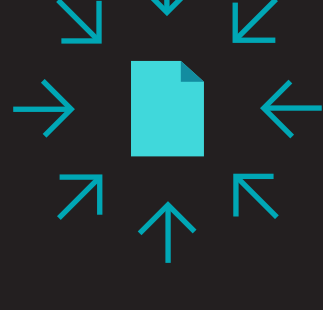
CIVIL & POLITICAL SEX & SEXUALITY RELIGION

FILTERING METHODS & UNINTENDED CENSORSHIP

Keyword Filtering blocks pages when blacklisted character patterns are identified within a URL. This results in an over censorship of webpages that incidentally include these character patterns but likely do not contain content that is objectionable to Iranian authorities.

URL Filtering blocks pages based on the whole address, implying the filtering apparatus specifically targeted the blocked content.

28
KEYWORDS

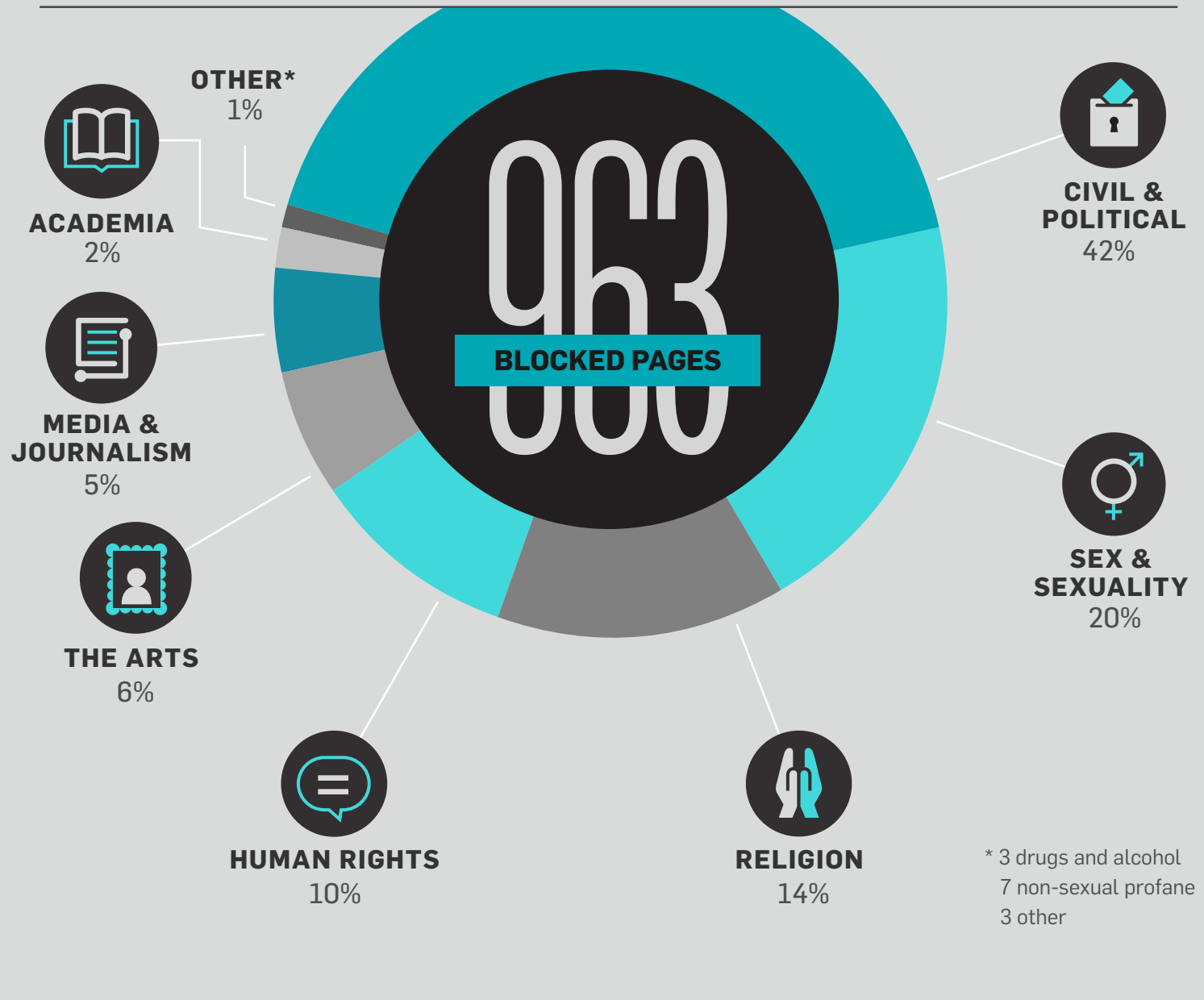


92 BLOCKED PAGES → 1/3 MISIDENTIFIED AS SEXUAL OR PROFANE

871
INTENTIONALLY
BLOCKED PAGES

THEMES OF WIKIPEDIA CENSORSHIP

Iranian censors generally target two types of Persian-language Wikipedia pages: those covering socio-political themes and those dealing with sexual themes. These pages cover a wide range of topics, including the tenets of the Bahá'í faith; *Harry Potter* actress Emma Watson; homosexuality; and a political assassination campaign called the Chain Murders.



PERSONAE NON GRATAE

> 1/2
OF BLOCKED PAGES ARE ABOUT PEOPLE



Many blocked pages are biographies of political figures, artists, human rights defenders, journalists, and government critics, some of whom were allegedly detained or killed by the authorities. Several bios of criticized state officials are likewise inaccessible.

161
ALLEGEDLY
DETAINED

108
ALLEGEDLY
KILLED

CIVIL & POLITICAL

403 articles 308 about people

State censors appear most sensitive to civil and political content on Wikipedia, often filtering articles about their political rivals and critics or episodes of political violence and upheaval. Prohibited Wiki-institutions can also cover government institutions and officials.

- 152 2009 Election/Green Movement
- 39 Independent Critics
- 38 Reformist
- 33 Chain Murders
- 26 Security Forces & Judiciary
- 20 18-Tir and Student Movement
- 14 Religious Nationalist
- 14 Conservative/Principalist
- 10 Foreign Affairs
- 9 Mojahedin-e-Khalq
- 8 Kurdish Activism
- 7 Leftist/Marxist
- 6 Monarchist
- 4 Nationalist
- 17 Other

SEX & SEXUALITY

189 articles 18 about people

Sex and sexuality articles are the chief targets of keyword filtering, which results in over censorship of articles misidentified as sexual. For example, entries about the Atoll Bikini coral reef, the chemical compound Stearalkonium, and Iranian city Kaskan are blocked by keywords. Keyword filtering also affects Wikipedia entries about sexual health, safe sex, and biology.

- 52 Sex Act
- 28 Misidentified as Sexual
- 26 Anatomy/Bodily Function
- 17 Pornography-Related
- 13 LGBT
- 8 Clothing
- 8 Sexual Crime
- 7 Romance
- 5 Health
- 5 Life Style
- 4 Sexual Art
- 16 Other

RELIGION

136 articles 42 about people

Many Wiki-entries about religious minorities and topics antagonistic to Muslims are off limits. Even articles about Muslims are blocked when they pertain to Sufi orders disfavored by the government.

- 59 Bahá'í
- 34 Atheism
- 16 Critical of Islam
- 8 Islam
- 6 Spiritual
- 5 Christianity
- 4 Criticism of Religion
- 1 Hinduism
- 1 Yarasan
- 1 Agnosticisim

HUMAN RIGHTS

93 articles 62 about people

Censors block articles about human rights defenders and organization. Articles describing abusive government practices, including stoning, Internet censorship, and psychological "white" torture are restricted.

- 31 Women's Rights
- 29 Human Rights (General)
- 19 Abuse by State/Judiciary
- 4 Ethnic
- 4 Prisoners' Rights
- 4 Free Expression
- 2 Right to Education
- 1 Child Rights
- 1 Labor Rights
- 1 LGBT Rights

MEDIA & JOURNALISM

51 articles 32 about people

Articles about media outlets, such as Facebook or the BBC, and journalists, editors and bloggers are blocked. Ironically, so is an entry describing Internet proxies, which are used to circumvent online censorship.

- 16 Reformist
- 8 Foreign Media and Journalists
- 6 Bloggers
- 5 Green Movement
- 5 Women's Issues
- 4 Social Media
- 1 State Media
- 1 Kurdish Media
- 4 Other

THE ARTS

59 articles 29 about people

Blocked entries related to the arts include pages about the graphic *Persepolis*, avant-garde singer Mohsen Namjoo, and the Brazilian dance samba. Wiki-biographies of young western actresses and female celebrities are also curiously inaccessible.

- 11 Socially Conscious
- 10 Deemed Religiously Blasphemous
- 10 Political
- 9 Sexual
- 6 Western Actresses / Female Celebrities
- 5 Feminist
- 3 LGBT-positive
- 5 Other