

Türkiye’de Instagram’ın Kapatılması

On the morning of Friday the 2nd Of August 2024, Instagram access was blocked all over Türkiye without any given reason by the Information Technologies and Communication Authority of Türkiye. (BTK)

While we were trying to understand the actual reason, the global media said that the reason for the closure was because some condolence messages for Ismael Haniyeh were censored after his killing.

Because a day before, Turkey's Head of Communication Fahrettin Altun, stated in a message that ““I also strongly condemn the social media platform Instagram, which prevents people from posting condolence messages on the martyrdom of Heniye without giving any reason. “This is a very clear and obvious attempt at censorship.” (‘‘Heniyen’in Őhadeti dolayısıyla insanların taziye mesajı yayınlamasını herhangi bir gerekçe göstermeden engelleyen sosyal medya platformu Instagram’ı da Őiddetle kınıyorum. Bu çok açık ve net bir sansür giriŐimidir’’)

[FAYNMEDYA](#)

Although it is said that the actual reason for Türkiye blocking access to the social media platform was because of failing to comply with the country’s ‘laws and rules’ and public sensitivities, according to a top Turkish official and several sources it is stated that the move came after Turkey's Head of Communication Fahrettin Altun (T.C. İletifim Bakanı) criticised Instagram for allegedly blocking posts containing condolence messages for the Palestinian militant group chief Ismail Haniyeh after his death. The Hamas political bureau chief and his bodyguard were killed in a predawn, on Wednesday, July 31st 2024, during an airstrike against the building they were staying at in Tehran, Iran.”

[EURO](#) and [REUTERS](#)

This nine-day ban resulted in protests from users and small businesses who make contact with their customers and earn income through the social media platform.

The 9-day ban of the platform hit many small businesses that operate in the e-commerce sector. The small businesses who make their sales via social media both lost contact with their customers and a critical amount of their income during the time they couldn’t access the social media platform.

The nine-day ban caused a rapid increase in the number of downloads of VPN’s.

It’s The *Small Businesses* That Got Affected

As an owner of a boutique business and someone who makes contact with their customers via the platform, Cihan Carav, said this about their experience during the period to ‘9. Köy’ with these words: “We set apart a separate budget for

Instagram and Meta each month, and we have a marketing/advertising strategy that constantly repeats itself.. After the closure of the platform, we wanted to observe the situation for the continuing 1 week-10 days. We had to decide whether to keep the account or permanently delete it, we waited to see if the platform would reopen, but when the lights of hope all faded, we finally took the decision to close the account”

Carav also stating that their online sales were still on the baby steps, “Right now we are still on our baby steps on online retail. Therefore the money we spent on marketing entirely went to the trash. In a normal case, we would make an income that would cover our marketing expenses but unfortunately that did not happen during this ban period.” Carav also stated they thought of switching to other social media platforms, stating that the research period is still ongoing, “We thought of switching to another platform after the ban, however since it was a research process, we decided to handle the situation this way” said Carav.

Carav, underlining that social media platforms are a very important tool in creating awareness for small businesses, said “Most people have trust issues when it comes to online platforms. If you are not a well-known/large company, if you are a boutique store, people ask questions like ‘Is this product original? Is this company real? Are you guys real? Are you guys really selling this product?’ Therefore we were using social media for mostly awareness reasons. Since we did not make really high incomes, we did not face a dramatic drop, but still we faced a 30%-40% drop in online sales.”

“The Ban Caused Me a %30 Income Loss”

Bahar Yüksel, a tattoo artist located in Kadikoy, Istanbul, stated that her business faced a near-%30 income loss during the 9-day closure of the platform. Stating that she works with appointments via Instagram, and that the closure caused her a significant customer loss, said: “We faced a %30 loss during the 9-day closure of the platform, because we are a business who works with appointments directly via the platform, or when a customer shows up at our store, we give them our Instagram address in order for them to make contact with us. Unfortunately however, during the 9-day closure of the app, this contact was completely lost. Even if we could access the app using a VPN, our customers reduced significantly which affected our income. Nobody has texted us via Instagram during this period. We tried to make contact using WhatsApp, however this was limited by our old customers and people who had our contact number”

Yüksel, also stating that they also give regular advertisements on the platform, however they had stopped doing that during this period, said “If we did give

advertisements, that money would have gone to waste which would have caused us a bigger loss than the one we already are facing.”

When we asked Yüksel if she thought of the idea of switching to an alternative platform during this 9-day ban, she answered: “It would be a very hard process since there really is no other platform where we can showcase our work to such a wide range of people. Plus, the audience is not the same in other platforms”

The Number of Orders *Went Down.*

I Couldn't Communicate With My Customers.

Beside her job as a nurse and beauty expert, Aylin Aksoy owns a business where she sells candles through Instagram, stated that the closure of the platform caused a large damage in her business, saying: “The ban affected the daily sales and general incomes of small businesses like mine. The access blockage of Instagram stopped many sales of an endless amount of business owners, including mine, which almost came to a complete stop. The number of sales dropped so much in terms of percentage, causing many small businesses including mine to shut down completely.

Aksoy, also underlining that Instagram is plays a critical role for small businesses to introduce themselves to the market and make contact with their customers (since many small businesses operate online and do not have a physical store), said: “Small accounts like mine use only instagram to promote our sales and use the platform to introduce themselves to a wider range of customers. Many small businesses also advertise via the platform. Not being able to advertise already on its own causes a huge loss, but the entire closure of the application caused me to suffer a great loss. Unfortunately during this period I faced communication problems with my customers since I do not make contact with them outside of Instagram. Naturally, this affected our sales very deeply.”

[9.KÖY](#)

Another interesting thing during this period was when President Recep Tayyip Erdogan shared a story on the platform, titled ‘Hayırlı Cumalar’ (which translates to Happy/Merry Friday), which he then deleted after 44 minutes of posting.

How About The *Digital Economy?*

On the 2nd of August, Instagram access was blocked in Turkiye due to reasons such as sexual assault against minors, encouraging suicide, and hate against Ataturk.

Speaking to CNBC-e, Emre Ekmekçi, Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Electronic Commerce Operators Association (ETİD), stated that 10% of the total e-commerce in the country is carried out on social media. Ekmekçi also emphasised that a daily e-commerce volume of 1.9 billion Turkish Liras could be affected with the influencer traffic created.

During this period, small businesses had to find other ways to continue their digital marketing activities. Other social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter (X), LinkedIn and TikTok are some important platforms that played an important role for small businesses during this period for them to be able to continue their digital marketing activities.

Facebook and Tiktok, with their wide range of audiences and strong communication resources, were the platforms that played the most important role during the 9-day closure of the app.

Some alternative ways to handle this period are E-Commerce Platforms: Business owners could market and sell their products via large electronic shopping platforms like Amazon, Trendyol, Hepsiburada. Websites and Blogs: Business owners could create a blog for their company to promote their sales during such a closure.

However in times like this, businesses should come up with alternative digital communication strategies to minimise the damage that could be done. Diversifying the digital marketing strategies would help businesses have a stronger infrastructure to handle situations like these.

[BLOOMBERG](#)

Access To The *Constitutional Court* Website Blocked

Turkish Journalists Association (TGC): “Blocking access to Instagram, which is used by over 57 Million people in the country, is clear censorship. At the same time, it is unacceptable to block access to the website of the Constitutional Court (Anayasa Mahkemesi / AYM), which ruled that the steps taken by the Directorate of Communications (İletişim Bakanlığı) to combat disinformation is an interference with the freedom of the press.”

The Constitutional Court, on their account on X, shared: “The cancellation of the rules that allow the Directorate of Communications’ authority to intervene with the freedom of press and expression.”

A very short time after this was posted, it was deleted and following that was the blockage of access to the website of AYM.

The board of TGC said the following in their statement, “In a country without Internet Freedom, freedom of the press and expression, human rights and modernity cannot be talked about. The internet plays a critical role in delivering news and information to people. In this context, the freedom to access the internet and spread information via the internet is under the ‘human rights’ category. But unfortunately in our country, access to social media platforms are frequently blocked, therefore violating our right to access information.”

According to a report prepared in 2023 by the Independent Freedom House organisation (Bağımsız Özgürlük Evi), Türkiye unfortunately ranks 55th among the 70 countries where the internet is *not* at liberty. “The government declaring the media and social media as enemies, and for the Constitutional Court, who is supposed to make decisions towards protecting freedom, to block access to the website is something both against the law and the freedom of people. In a democratic society, the government is responsible for serving the understanding of the ‘free press’. In a democratic country, all the information-based platforms are supposed to function freely. We are calling on both the government and the opposition to take action on removing the access ban.”

Contemporary Journalists Association (ÇGD) also reacted to the access blockage. In their statement, they said “It is clear that no lessons have been learned from the similar bans that have been made many times previously and each time interpreted by judicial decisions as ‘an obstacle to freedom of expression’. These types of censorship are the characteristics of an authoritarian government and are unacceptable. This last move is a new systematic attack against the freedom of press and expression in Türkiye. Including Instagram, thousands of news articles have faced bans in the previous months, these sources should be immediately reopened to the public again.”

“Freedom of press and expression are the main columns of democracy. These types of censorship are unacceptable.” (ANKA)

After the ban, one of the first comments came from Deputy Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Ömer Fatih Sayan. Sayan said “They say, ‘I read what I know, I publish what I want, I don't publish what I don't want.’ We did not accept this and we will not accept it. We will do whatever is necessary.”

On a live broadcast he attended, The Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Abdulkadir Uraloğlu said: “There are rules set by our country. Our country has values and sensitivities. Their actions and shortcomings are clear, we will remove the ban as soon as they fulfil them.”

“Bu karar devleti bağlar, bireyi bağlamaz”

After the closure of the social media platform, reactions of many famous names in Turkiye came following. Some of these reactions are like the following:

- Turkish Journalist Fatih Portakal said on a Twitter post: “They closed instagram because they *wanted to*. The reason, the killing of Haniyeh, and then the platform acting arbitrarily after some posts. Then the people who govern us say “you do like that we do like this” and they take their pain out on us. Why would you even close a platform that you are going to re-open after 3 days? It’s a ban for showing off. Plus we can access it via VPN. By the way, mourning was declared throughout the entire country for ‘İhvancı Hamashlı Haniye’. ‘Bu karar devleti bağlar, bireyi bağlamaz.”
- Former Member of The Turkish Parliament Muharrem Ince: “What is this access blockage against Instagram? If you are so touched by it then go and delete your Instagram account. Both you and us can have peace then!” said on a Twitter post *tagging* President Erdogan.
- Mayor of Istanbul Ekrem İmamoğlu: “Social media is a platform that everyone uses for many purposes, including trade and communication. The closure of a social media platform that everybody uses cannot be closed out of nowhere in a morning for arbitrary reasons. Instagram should be opened to the public again immediately, and the people responsible with communications should stop acting as if they are a censorship unit.”

It’s like we *can’t live* without it

tam da tatil zamanına denk gelen kapanma. sovumuzu yapamayacaksak tatile gitmenin ne anlamı var. özellikle spor salonlarında yoğun iptaller var diye duydum.



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An unknown user on the popular Turkish platform Ekşisözlük said “They had to do it right in the holiday season. What is the point of going if we can’t show our vacation to people.” This person also added that there were many cancellations to gyms. From this, we can see how fake everything is. A friend of mine even said one of the people they know cancelled their 1-month vacation to the popular Turkish destination Bodrum just because Instagram got blocked.

A news article by Kenan Gürbüz says: “The closure of Instagram affected Turkiye too, just like many other places. It hit Muğla the hardest since it was the most visited destination this season. Hundreds of customers cancelled their early reservations, showing the ban of the platform as an excuse.”

The Chair of The South Aegean Touristic Hotels and Businesses Association (GETOB) Mustafa Deliveli, underlining that the closure of Instagram affected the tourism in the region deeply, said: “This situation had a negative effect on the tourism in our region with Marmaris leading in front. Especially areas like Datça and Marmaris who make income through the domestic market. The main sales of these regions are through mostly direct sales and social media. The closure of the platform has almost completely stopped new reservations except frequent visitors. Vacation posts and interactions on Instagram motivate and activate the customers. I stand beside the fact that the absence of the platform affected all the businesses in the region.”

Does Social Media Make You *Forget Things*?

According to Time Magazine, a 2018 study published in the [Journal of Experimental Social Psychology](#), researchers found that those who documented and shared their experiences on social media formed less precise memories of those events. The study led by Tamir and her team, revealed that participants who shared their experienced performed about 10% worse on memory tests compared to those who did not.”

With the arrival of the portable internet, almost any fact is now accessible within a swipe of a finger. This ease has led to what researchers call the “Google effect,” which is when there is less need to store information internally when it is so easy to be able to access it. This ease led to us neglecting information itself, but instead to remember where to find it.

This effect is related to another concern linked to social media: FOMO, or the fear of missing out (which is something I, personally, have). With the rise of shared content, the range of exciting activities that shows up on our feed widens by a lot. FOMO, is associated with being less satisfied with your life, in a worse mood and emotionally unfulfilled.

The point I want to make from here is that social media has a great effect on our lives. We see things that come up on our feed that we don’t even know if it real or not, we immediately think “ohh this seems fun” and sometimes this “fun” thing can be a very dangerous activity. There have been sightings (including me, I have also sighted a few) on the platform where suicide and death is shown as a “fun” thing.

In my own words, this proves a very important point that social media has become an inevitable part of nearly everybody's life. People are cancelling their plans just because they will not be able to post it on Instagram. I still wonder then, how did people go to vacations and actually spend money on them if they were not going to post it in the 80's. They actually enjoyed it.. I mean is this really that important to people? Posting every single part of their life on social media just so that they can get a few 'like' and 'comment' notifications on their phone. It's crazy. Think about this, a similar example is that you stop drinking water entirely just because the brand of water you like has shut down. It's crazy right. You are stopping the entire action just because something very small and unimportant happened. Or it's like to stop eating food completely because your dietician told you that you need to stop eating your favourite food. People believe the fact that they cannot live without social media. However it is actually social media itself that is keeping that person from doing all those fun things. People cannot drop the phone and have actual fun these days as far as I have seen.

The average weekly time spent on Instagram is around 5 hours 36 minutes and has around 400 Million active users per day according to [this](#).