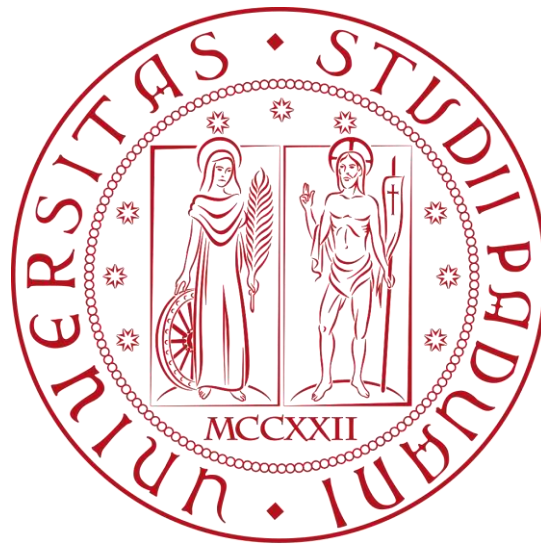# UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, LAW, AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Master's degree in European and Global Studies

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Title: Online Censorship in the Middle East and North Africa

Abstract:

Today, the Internet is used by more than a quarter of the world's population, yet access is quite uneven globally. The thesis aims to explore the issue of online censorship in Egypt and Tunisia, focusing on the role of authoritarian regimes in shaping Internet freedom in these countries. The thesis argues that while the Internet has the potential to be a tool for democracy and freedom of expression, it can also be used by authoritarian regimes to exert control over their populations. The thesis uses a research design that is exploratory, descriptive, and analytical, with qualitative research methods such as interviews, to provide a more nuanced understanding of Internet censorship and gender differences in Internet usage. The research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the potential for online activism and free expression in the context of authoritarianism, and the thesis addresses the main research question: How has the Internet become a tool for control in authoritarian regimes? Overall, the thesis intends to provide insights into the complex landscape of Internet rights and censorship in Egypt and Tunisia and to inform policy and practice aimed at promoting Internet freedom and gender equality in the region.

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List of Acronyms:

EMG - Egyptian Media Group

ESCWA - United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

ICCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICT - Information and communications technology

IGF- Internet Governance Forum

IRPC - Internet Rights and Principles Coalition

ICANN - Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

MENA- Middle East and North Africa

NGOs- Non-governmental organizations, or NGOs

NTRA - National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Egypt

OHCHR - Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

UNHRC - United Nations Human Rights Council

UDHR - Universal Declaration of Human Rights

WWW -World Wide Web

Introduction

Despite the apparent development in all areas of the Middle East and North Africa due to the usage of the Internet which played in fostering civil society and makes everything simple and easy, there remains a dark point called censorship that is described as a severe violation of human rights. The Internet has had a substantial impact on Arab countries' political areas during the previous few years, Egypt's 2011 revolt was part of a wave of pro-democracy rallies and revolutions that erupted in 2010 and 2011 across the Middle East and North Africa, challenging some of the region's entrenched authoritarian regimes.

Protests in Tunisia and Egypt overthrew their respective governments in quick succession, inspiring other Arab countries to follow suit. However, not every country experienced success in the protest movement, as demonstrators expressing political and economic grievances were regularly met with savage crackdowns by restricting communications and censoring, and monitoring. Indeed, Social media use has been associated with the growth of political protest in numerous places all over the world, so the result of the Arab Spring, one of the more pernicious illusions regarding the determining role of information technologies has emerged: Numerous references to a "Facebook Revolution" or "YouTube Revolt" may be seen on websites, chat groups, and news items.[1]

Social media sites as a manifestation of the Internet's liberalizing ethos: instruments for empowering people, opening up economic possibilities, enhancing freedom of speech, disseminating liberal ideals, and giving dissidents an alternative communication channel. By reflecting public opinion, social media platforms have the potential to enhance democracies. According to Clay Shirky social media may expand freedom and alter people's political beliefs by exposing them to various viewpoints shared by friends, relatives, and coworkers. Social media platforms were attributed with transferring power from authoritarian governments to common people demanding freedom and social justice around the turn of the millennium.[2]

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[1] Khamis, S., Gold, P. B., & Vaughn, K. (2012, January 1). Beyond Egypt's "Facebook Revolution" and Syria's "YouTube Uprising:" Comparing Political Contexts, Actors. . . ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267383659_Beyond_Egypt's_Facebook_Revolution_and_Syria's_YouTube_Uprising_Comparing_Political_Contexts_Actors_and_Communication_Strategies

[2] Clay Shirky, "The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change," Foreign Affairs 90, no. 1 (January/February 2011): 28–41, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25800379

Social media platforms have developed "knowledge power"[3] in recent years as a result of the enormous volumes of data that they have gathered and marshaled. By compromising user privacy and getting more access to users' data over time, Google and Facebook have been able to sell more advertisements. Despite these restrictions, digital technologies have undoubtedly had a significant impact on the Arab public's ability to make its collective voice heard. Although the Arab government's attempt at censorship is particularly visible during times of high political upheaval. Indeed, Social media use has been associated with the growth of political protest in numerous places all over the world. On the other hand, digital authoritarianism is a governing-governed relationship based on the constant use of authority and contempt for human rights, particularly freedom of expression and Internet rights, as well as freedom of association. Furthermore, Digital authoritarianism is being touted as a means for governments to use technology to control their populace, reversing the image of the Internet as a tool for authoritarianism. there are rising fears about the worldwide collapse of democracy and the advent of digital authoritarianism.[4]

The Internet is an effective means of transmitting information about upcoming events and political changes quickly. Governmental authorities have unique opportunities to identify and stifle protest activities as a result of the usage of social media by potential dissidents. In authoritarian regimes, there is still some concern about surveillance. Recent technological advancements have made large-scale government surveillance possible. Within the context of the project "Open Net Initiative," a database was built for 74 nations[5] throughout the world, from which a ranking of governments was generated based on the level of filtering of websites on political messages. When governments implement website filtering, the Middle Eastern model of Internet censorship is driven by two key aspects: political and religious. Indeed, the most frequently censored websites have content that opposes prevailing moral ideals and norms. In non-democratic countries, political leaders preside over brittle regimes

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[3] Sharif, N. (2022, August 22). Social media and changing political dynamics. Dunya Blog. https://blogs.dunyanews.tv/29466/

[4] Freedom House. (n.d.-g). The Rise of Digital Authoritarianism. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2018/rise-digital-authoritarianism

[5] The Internet is the world's most important infrastructure.the ONI has built a database of internet filtering and surveillance practices in 74 countries around the world. The database contains information on the types of content that are blocked or filtered, (n.d.). https://ourinternet.org/report/

that harass, assault, detain, and surveil. This is the phenomenon known as transnational repression, which has increased in scope and taken on new forms in the digital era.

As a tool for social control and repression, digital technologies are used against minorities. The rising influence of a few big companies that have become the digital gatekeepers of basic rights poses yet another substantial danger to such rights. In times of political tensions, elections, rallies, demonstrations, military conflicts, or other types of crises, such as a pandemic, the risk of employing modern technologies to repress or control grows.

Transnational repression[6] is a potent tool of global authoritarianism, and it poses a threat to freedom and democracy worldwide like the use of state-of-emergency clauses in connection with various crises to support permanent limits on basic rights and "surveillance capitalism" which relies on the intrusive collection of private actors' data for financial gain while simultaneously permitting state authorities to take advantage of their services for their gain. New technologies, including malware and surveillance equipment, have given oppressive governments previously unheard-of powers to stifle opposition.

Modern government surveillance relies more and more on technology, such as electronic flies[7] monitoring the Internet with fake accounts. For instance, the Chinese government[8] has established itself as an innovator in Internet censorship, employing technology to spot and suppress attempts at public organizing. The Middle East and North Africa area, which is linked to some of the most oppressive governments in the world, is also a burgeoning market for social media monitoring. The social media monitoring techniques that are now widespread in democracies first gained popularity in counterterrorism operations and on overseas battlefields where there were serious security dangers. Law enforcement and other agencies at the local, state and federal levels are increasingly repurposing these tools for more

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[6] Talebi, T. (2022, February 16). Transnational Digital Repression in the MENA Region. Project on Middle East Political Science. https://pomeps.org/transnational-digital-repression-in-the-mena-region

[7] O'Toole, M. (n.d.). Digital authoritarianism: The rise of electronic armies in the Middle East. Middle East Eye. https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/middle-east-digital-authoritarianism-electronic-armies-rise

[8] Abrougui, A. (2017, January 9). "The internet is freedom": Index speaks to Tunisian Internet Agency chief. Index on Censorship. https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2012/02/tunisia-internet-moez-chakchouk/

dubious practices, such as screening travelers for their political views, tracking students' behavior, or keeping an eye on activists and protesters.

While authorities typically justified the use of these tools with the need to combat serious crimes like terrorism, child sexual abuse, and large-scale drug trafficking in the past, this expansion increases the possibility that constitutionally protected activity would be hampered and makes it harder to monitor surveillance measures. The potential for abuse posed by improved social media surveillance is startling, both for authoritarian and democratic administrations. There will probably be more arrests as a result of the widespread surveillance of Internet activity for offensive or unlawful statements, especially in places where there are weak protections for free speech. In authoritarian regimes, monitoring intended to spot and prevent protests would also hinder democratic movements. It is generally known that greater monitoring has a negative response effect on freedom of speech. Activists and journalists who might otherwise hold governments accountable for wrongdoing are more likely to practice self-censorship, while dissidents and people from marginalized groups will hesitate before posting their political views online to avoid being detained or subjected to travel restrictions.

Additionally, the public is unable to peacefully interact and gather online thanks to social media surveillance intended to stop mobilization and identify demonstrators. Even though those interactions are ostensibly public, indiscriminately monitoring the general public's Internet communications violates international human rights law and the principles of due process set down in democratic constitutions

This study analyzes Internet trends and regulations that influence freedom of speech in the Middle East and North Africa area by focusing on restricting free speech, online censorship, incidents of people being jailed for their online activity, and government policies influencing Internet access. Digital rights and freedoms are often at risk due to the increasing power of governments and corporations to monitor and control online activity. As stated in the Charter of Human Rights and Principles for the Internet[9] "everyone has the freedom to communicate without being subjected to arbitrary monitoring or interception, including behavioral tracking, profiling, or cyberstalking" or the fear of such monitoring or interception. The governance of

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[9] Internet Rights and Principles Coalition. (2022a, November 28). IRPC Charter – Internet Rights and Principles Coalition. https://internetrightsandprinciples.org/charter/

the Internet, which remains a relatively transnational realm, is governed through interactions between international multi-stakeholder organizations like the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and national governments. One of the most important areas where this interaction is important is the field of rights, notably the issue of who effectively enjoys human rights in the digital age.The main research question is: How has the Internet become a tool for control in authoritarian Regimes? and the sub-question is: How do gender inequality and online harassment impact women's ability to express themselves freely and fully participate in online discourse in Tunisia and Egypt?

The research design of this study will be exploratory, descriptive, and analytical. Exploratory research aims to explore the phenomenon of Internet censorship in both countries Egypt and Tunisia, specifically looking at how has the Internet become a tool for control in authoritarian Regimes. Descriptive research aims to provide an overall perspective of Internet rights and censorship in these countries in the authoritarian regime. Finally, analytical research aims to analyze the data collected on how activists have utilized the Internet to challenge authoritarian governments (the action), as well as how these regimes have responded to these challenges (the reaction). I examine how activists utilized social media to share information and arrange protests, how they felt unsafe on the Internet, and how they used encrypted messaging apps to avoid surveillance. We will also examine how authoritarian regimes have reacted to these activities, including censorship, surveillance, and even the arrest and imprisonment of activists, and provide insights into the gender differences in Internet usage and how they are shaped by social and cultural factors. the study will use qualitative research methods, such as interviews. Qualitative research methods are appropriate for this study as they allow for an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the participants regarding Internet censorship and its impact on Internet access and usage.

The use of technology by authoritarian governments to enable violations of human rights has been well-shown for years. Many of these businesses openly support authoritarian governments as "repression's little helper"[10] providing software that enables the filtering and censoring of Internet information as well as technologies that aid in snooping on residents.

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[10] Surveillance Technologies. (n.d.). Electronic Frontier Foundation. https://www.eff.org/issues/mass-surveillance-technologies

Due to this, there are now more excessive rules. There is a wide range of variables contributing to authoritarian regimes' efforts to censor citizens online.

Fundamental rights have emerged as a more important topic in Internet governance and the current state of the governance environment. this study will focus on an explanatory scheme for the formation and implementation of Internet censorship in Egypt and Tunisia by conducting a qualitative comparative analysis between the two countries because those countries are religiously, socially, and politically motivated toward human rights and freedom of expression Egypt and Tunisia are both Middle Eastern and North African countries with a history of political upheaval, government transitions, and struggles for human rights and freedom of expression. In recent years, both countries have seen waves of political unrest, with citizens demanding greater political freedom and economic opportunity. While the two countries share some similarities, they also have significant contrasts.

Egypt is the Arab world's most populous country, with a more established and entrenched authoritarian regime. Tunisia, on the other hand, was the origin of the Arab Spring and has made great strides toward a more democratic administration. Given the parallels and variations in their political and socioeconomic situations, Investigating Internet censorship in both nations offers a rare opportunity to obtain a more comprehensive knowledge of how authoritarian regimes influence Internet freedom and control.In both Tunisia and Egypt, gender inequality is a significant issue when it comes to digital expression and Internet rights. Women are more likely than men to face online harassment, including threats, insults, and sexual harassment, which can limit their ability to freely express themselves online and engage in public dialogue. This is often linked to wider societal norms and attitudes towards women's participation in public life, which can also affect their participation in online spaces.

Moreover, examining gender differences in Internet usage in both countries can shed light on how social and cultural factors shape online behavior and experiences in different contexts. The first chapter analyzes the fundamental rights, the Internet Rights and Principles Dynamic Coalition, the charter of human rights, and principles for the Internet by focusing on the rights to freedom of expression and opinion, assembly, and participation in public and political life and explains how it is important to pay attention to freedom of expression and human rights in the digital age. Human rights change along with how people live their lives online. The significance of human rights to safeguard each individual remains the same even though they were created before the increased dynamics of digitalization. Information and

communication technology (ICT) advancements have changed social, political, and economic aspects of life, but they have also frequently made it possible for people to exercise their human rights. The impact on freedom of expression is perhaps the most notable. Technology has made it possible for people to exercise this freedom " to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing, or print" (Art. 19, ICCPR)[11] on a scale never before possible. The ability of humans to spread ideas is growing. People now have more power than ever to share information and knowledge in ways that are not mediated by traditional media, for as by launching a blog or a crowd-funding campaign.

Technology not only boosts minorities and promotes collective mobilizations, but it also gives people the freedom to express their different identities. The use of technology is "biased yet ambivalent"(Feenberg, 1999; McCarthy, 2011)."[12] Technology has regularly exposed people to new threats to their human rights. Because governments are increasingly restricting people's freedom of expression.However, institutions and businesses that create computer algorithms to handle data could as easily impede freedom of expression by making subjective judgments. However, when it comes to online human rights, more than only the freedom of speech and the right to privacy must be taken into account. It is necessary to study them and draw attention to any transitional consequences, particularly if all human rights are just as valid online as they are offline. The response of governments to prevent people from coming together and organizing demonstrations by using blocking and Internet disruptions varies depending on the country and the situation. To ensure a proper transition and protection of human rights in the digital sphere, cooperation and network-oriented approaches are therefore essential, especially given that non-state actors like multinational corporations or technical organizations can also implement policies that have a significant impact.

Chapter two focuses on an explanatory scheme for the formation and implementation of Internet censorship in Egypt and how censorship of the Internet and digital applications has had a big impact on preventing people from using the Internet on certain topics because they

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[11] OHCHR. (n.d.). International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights

[12] McCarthy, D. R. (2013). Technology and 'the International' or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Determinism. Millennium, 41(3), 470–490. https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829813484636

are fearful of being arrested in Egypt. Indeed, Censoring both Internet providers and content has had a substantial impact on stopping Egyptians from using the Internet to discuss sensitive political subjects such as criticizing the government, discussing opposition groups or movements, and covering protests or demonstrations. and freely share their ideas. The Egyptian administration has implemented a number of measures to monitor and control Internet traffic, such as banning access to particular websites and social media platforms and monitoring online behavior for potentially sensitive content. Open communication increases the risk of being tracked, outed, or worse as Egyptian governments develop more sophisticated digital surveillance tools. This part explains the Egyptian government's response to digital expression by focusing on the regime that is indeed engaging in a crackdown on freedom of expression online and examines the laws that legitimize controls and restrictions on digital spaces and investigates the methods used by state authorities to surveil and target digital expression.Indeed, The Egyptian government has responded to digital expression by cracking down on online freedom of expression. The government has enacted laws and regulations that legitimate controls and limitations on digital spaces and these laws and regulations have been utilized to target and monitor digital expression. To monitor and target digital expression, the government has employed surveillance technology and strategies. This involves the use of software to monitor social media platforms and online communication, as well as physical surveillance, such as Internet cafe monitoring and tracking of individuals' online activities. At times of political turmoil or protest, the government has also used techniques such as limiting access to certain websites and shutting down the Internet in certain areas.

Chapter three covers various aspects related to the role of the Tunisian government in controlling social media. It includes a history of Internet censorship in Tunisia, constitutional rights related to the Internet, telecommunications laws and regulations, government control over social media, cases of online activities and censorship, and censorship tools.

Then chapter four develops a comparative analysis between Egypt and Tunisia. It is clear that both countries have experienced Internet censorship during authoritarian regimes. The implementation of these protections and the use of censorship tools remain ongoing concerns in both countries. In conclusion, the comparison between Egypt's and Tunisia's approaches to Internet rights reveals several similarities and differences. Both countries have experienced Internet censorship under authoritarian regimes, but both have made strides in protecting

these rights through constitutional provisions. Both nations have passed laws governing the Internet and have employed censorship techniques to prevent access to particular types of content. Despite constitutional safeguards, the implementation of online rights remains a challenge in both countries. There is a need to ensure that these safeguards are implemented in practice and to remedy any loopholes in the legislation. According to collected data, it is also clear that in both Tunisia and Egypt, there are some inequalities in Internet rights between men and women. Women are more likely than men in Tunisia and Egypt to face online harassment, including threats, insults, and sexual harassment. This can limit their ability to freely express themselves online and engage in public dialogue. When it comes to Internet rights, women in Tunisia and Egypt confront some hurdles, including limited access, lower levels of digital knowledge, and a higher risk of harassment and censorship. Furthermore, the use of censoring techniques to restrict access to information should be rigorously monitored to ensure that it does not violate the right to free expression. The available data and the scope of the investigation limit the scope of this analysis. Further research might look into the effectiveness of legislation and constitutional protections in practice, as well as the impact of censorship on Internet users and society as a whole. Furthermore, the comparative approach might be expanded to include other nations in the region or to look at Internet rights in other situations.

Chapter I: Fundamental Rights and the Internet

Fundamental rights are fundamental human rights that are thought to be necessary for the growth and welfare of both individuals and society at large. These liberties include the freedoms of speech and expression as well as the rights to privacy and information access. The exercise of fundamental rights has been impacted by the Internet's integration into our daily lives. The right to access information and the exercise of freedom of speech and expression have both been made possible by the Internet. However, it has also brought about fresh difficulties for security and privacy protection. Concerns about how Internet-related activities affect fundamental rights have grown in recent years. People are at risk of human rights abuses because of their usage of the Internet in numerous nations across the world. Governments frequently commit breaches of the right to free speech. These may use a range of strategies, including focusing on dissenting voices, screening and or censoring material and even completely cutting off access to technology. There are still dangers for journalists, dissidents, and other people who express their thoughts online in many parts of the world.

Modern telecommunication means, such as the Internet and mobile phones, allow individuals from all over the world to communicate ideas, information, photographs, and sounds more simply and cheaply than conventional media tools, such as newspapers.(Figliola, Addis & Lum, 2011).[13] Another tactic used by oppressive governments to censor and limit Internet material is control of the telecommunications sector. Significant governments have increased their monitoring capabilities recently, which presents many difficulties for the right to privacy. For both targeted and broad monitoring, many oppressive governments rely on sophisticated and potent software. There are other human rights under risk in the digital domain in addition to freedom of expression and the right to privacy. Other rights, such as the right to assemble freely or the freedom from discrimination based on one's race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation, have also been denied to technology users.

This chapter focuses on the rights to privacy and freedom of speech since those rights have been the most frequently violated, but it also tries to show a connection between objectionable behavior and the whole range of human rights. An outline of international rules and standards created by intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations or the

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[13] Figliola, Patricia Moloney. *Promoting Global Internet Freedom: Policy and Technology*. Vol. 23. Congressional Research Service, 2013.

Council of Europe is provided in this section. It also encompasses technological standards, corporate policies, and values, all of which are increasingly created with the active participation of non-state actors. The assignment is to identify the laws and standards that have been essential in bringing the human rights regime into the digital world, rather than to present an entire list of all applicable laws and standards. Most of the current human rights treaties that have legal force were influenced by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR),[14] notably the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),[15] which came into force in 1976 and has legal force for the governments that have ratified it. While Article 19 on freedom of opinion and expression is expanded to include potential restrictions based on "rights or reputations of others" and "the protection of national security or public order or public health or morals," Article 17 on the right to privacy is repeated verbatim in the ICCPR. It should be observed that Article 19 presents the conflict that currently exists in discussions of human rights in the digital world between freedom of speech and national security. The UNHRC[16] generally approved a Resolution in 2012 on the promotion, defense, and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet. the use of fundamental rights has been both facilitated and constrained by the Internet. Although many nations have taken steps to safeguard Internet rights through constitutional and legal provisions, much work needs to be done to guarantee that fundamental rights are effectively protected in the digital age.

1.1 The history of Internet Censorship

The continuous expansion of the Internet is mirrored by a similar expansion in censorship. This study will analyze the causes of censorship in the Middle East and North Africa once political events emerge more adequate for detecting the rise and spread of new types of censorship. Internet censorship has a long history in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, where numerous governments have employed a variety of techniques to regulate online information flow. States and private companies alike have the power to

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[14] OHCHR. (n.d.-b). Universal Declaration of Human Rights. https://www.ohchr.org/en/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

[15] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) | Equality and Human Rights Commission. (n.d.). https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-human-rights-work/monitoring-and-promoting-un-treaties/international-covenant-civil-and

[16] UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. (n.d.). UNHCR. https://www.unhcr.org/

restrict or support the fulfillment of imagined digital rights in the Internet's modern political economy. Digital constitutionalism must recognize the right to restrict the authority of both public authorities and private enterprises. According to Christoph Graber (2017:3)[17]it is essential to distinguish between the legal and social institutionalization of constitutional rights. Several Middle Eastern governments have restricted apps and websites that may incite emotions or provoke political strife, for example, The Tunisian government started preventing access to online newspapers and opposition websites in 2002. This marked the start of a long-lasting campaign to restrict Internet freedom.

In the Middle East, some people or organizations promote social media platform banning and Internet restriction under the pretense of upholding religious and cultural principles and values. According to (Gagnier and Margossian, 2011)[18] the majority of scholars argue that this is inappropriate because it violates the rules of the international agreement. Censorship advocates support the plan because it provides the necessary support for their cultural values and ideology. The main idea is that Internet and app censorship in the Middle East has alienated its population and prevented them from engaging with the outside world. Because of the political context in the countries where they are banned, these websites and apps are frequently blocked. Censorship of the Internet and applications has had a big impact on preventing people from using the Internet on certain topics for example, in Egypt, people may be afraid to address topics such as government corruption, human rights violations, or criticism of the military for fear of being arrested or punished. Similarly, in Tunisia, people may be hesitant to express thoughts that contradict the government's official position or are perceived to be critical of particular religious or cultural values.

Internet tools and social media networks, particularly in Tunisia and Egypt, encouraged comparatively nonviolent forms of protest and tens of thousands of people responded positively to the call to demonstrate against government policies through a Facebook campaign conducted by the opposition "April 6 Youth Movement "[19]which catalyzed the

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[17] The Shifting Landscape of Global Internet Censorship. (2017, June 29). Berkman Klein Center. https://cyber.harvard.edu/publications/2017/06/GlobalInternetCensorship
[18] Redeker, D., Gill, L., & Gasser, U. (2018). Towards digital constitutionalism? Mapping attempts to craft an Internet Bill of Rights. International Communication Gazette, 80(4), 302–319. https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048518757121
[19] April 6 Youth Movement. (2017, February 19). EgyptToday. https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/6/3340/April-6-Youth-Movement

demonstrations (Stepanova, 2012).[20] Many publications by international organizations and research institutions have been devoted to the study of forms of control on Arab countries' Internet, as well as the description of strategies, methods, and the frequency of Internet censorship. Donella Della Porta asserts that private rights, not just their political equivalents, may be required or beneficial in defending our civic or socioeconomic interests and rights.[21] When they are defined and justified in a way that respects our freedom and equality, for instance, they can assist in shielding us from arbitrary arrest and incarceration or unfair business rivalry. Therefore, democracy can protect civil and economic freedoms as well as equality, but it cannot assist in securing our rightful rights in political participation and choice. Therefore, as Jean Cohen (2012)[22] argues, "personal privacy rights guarantee the basic minimum for respect and protection of individual difference" when they are properly defined.

The history of Internet censorship in the Middle East and North Africa has been characterized by a consistent pattern of governmental control and limitation of online content. The main goals of this control have been to stifle religious criticism, political opposition, and the dissemination of information that would constitute a threat to the ruling regimes. Governmental oversight and content restrictions have characterized the history of Internet censorship in the MENA region. Although there have been some initiatives to support online freedom and combat censorship, it is still challenging for individuals and organizations to exercise their right to free expression online. Basic liberties and rights known as "fundamental rights" are seen to be necessary for people to live honorable lives. National constitutions, international agreements, declarations of human rights, and other legal instruments frequently contain provisions for these rights. The basic human rights required to secure the protection of people's rights online are known as fundamental rights in the context of the Internet. For people to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, access to information, and participation in public and political life, these rights are necessary. The growth of democratic norms and principles on the Internet depends on fundamental rights to

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[20] Stepanova, E. 2011. The role of information communication technologies in the "arab Spring": Implications beyond the region. PONaRS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 159. http://ponarseurasia.com/sites/default/files/policy-memospdf/pepm_159.pdf
[21] Della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (1999). Social movements. The SAGE Handbook of, 656.
[22] Globalization and Sovereignty. (n.d.). Google Books. https://books.google.it/books?id=CIG3ougbCaoC

ensure that it will continue to be a free and open forum for the exchange of ideas, beliefs, and information.

1.2 Internet rights

The Internet should be open and accessible to everybody. All people are free and equal in their rights and dignity, which must be protected, secured, and fulfilled in the digital world. These rights include accessibility, the freedom to seek information, an open and secure Internet, and the privacy and security of personal information. The expected outcome of providing Internet access is the development of politically powerful, engaged, and informed persons (Chadwick, Coleman, Blumler, & Jagoda, 2006).[23] Free Internet access must be regarded as a fundamental human right, especially in developing nations where many people lack access to the Internet and political participation is increasingly conducted online. This includes basic liberties like free speech, access to information, and the right to assemble. The availability of an unfettered Internet connection may be crucial in defending other fundamental human rights, such as the right to life, liberty, and freedom from torture.

Millions of people might enjoy "minimally decent lifestyles" as a result, in the meanwhile. The Internet is a helpful and essential resource. It is the source and format of information. It not only functions as a fast-moving global platform for the community to be informed about international events. The Internet cannot be subject to any limits unless they are legally mandated or required in a democratic society to safeguard public morality, public health, or national security, as well as other people's rights and freedoms. As enshrined in article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)[24] "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty."Article 2 implies that all people should have equal access to information and should not face discriminatory restrictions based on their ethnicity, gender, or other personal

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[23] Al-Kandari, A., & Hasanen, M. (2012). The impact of the Internet on political attitudes in Kuwait and Egypt. Telematics and Informatics, 29(3), 245-253.

[24] Carbó, G., & Barreiro, B. (2016). Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). De Gruyter EBooks, 278–282. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110432251-130

characteristics. This means that governments and other organizations should not ban or restrict access to information or online material based on discriminatory or biased criteria.Regarding gender inequality, Article 2 underlines that all individuals are entitled to the same rights and freedoms, regardless of gender. In the context of Internet censorship and gender inequality, this means that women should have equal access to information and online content as males, and should not be subject to gender-based censoring practices.

In the wake of the 2013 Snowden revelation[25], which significantly increased the number of "peripheral" privacy rights and principles, a number of projects have been launched to enhance universal privacy rights. such as the right to data self-determination and control, the right to privacy, the right to encrypt communications, and the right to expressly be shielded from government surveillance. As a result, this is being expressed in far more precise and complex ways than in the past, and it is being done by examining the underlying motivations that underpin digital constitutionalism attempts.

The definition of censorship[26] includes any blocking and filtering software developed to prevent access to data that is not under the end user's control. The Internet's governance and regulation are sometimes described as decentralized and open, with the goal of limiting government or other intrusion to the greatest extent possible. This strategy is known as the "multi-stakeholder model "[27] and it involves a variety of parties, including governments, civil society organizations, technical specialists, and the corporate sector, all working together to design and implement Internet regulations and standards. The Internet is like a mirror that reflects the real world. So, governments are concerned about its political impact and want to use the Internet for economic reasons, (Anderson J, 2000).[28] The recognition of new rights is facilitated by digital technologies, which also have an impact on how fundamental rights like freedom of speech and access to information are exercised, protected, and violated.

[25] Greenwald, G., MacAskill, E., & Poitras, L. (2021, September 29). Edward Snowden: the whistleblower behind the NSA surveillance revelations. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/09/edward-snowden-nsa-whistleblower-surveillance

[26] Cox, C. B. (1979). The Varieties of Censorial Experience: Toward a Definition of Censorship. The High School Journal, 62(8), 311–319. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40365120

[27] Internet Society. (2019, January 9). Internet Governance - Why the Multistakeholder Approach Works - Internet Society. https://www.internetsociety.org/resources/doc/2016/internet-governance-why-the-multistakeholder-approach-works/

[28] Anderson, C. J. (2000). Economic voting and political context: a comparative perspective. Electoral studies, 19(2-3), 151-170.

By providing and regulating safe and unfettered access to online information, the development of digital rights and digital citizenship is an element of the legal system's adaptation to the twenty-first century. Technology advancements result in a continuing need for new nonsupervisory textiles. The law must be changed to protect and preserve fundamental rights in the digital era. The ability to use computers, other electronic devices, and communication networks, as well as to access, create, and publish digital media, is known as a "digital right."[29] Laws must be simplified in the digital era to cover and maintain initial rights by ensuring that laws relating to digital technology, platforms, and services are worded in a way that individuals can clearly comprehend their rights and obligations in the digital era.

One of the digital rights that have explosive ties to seclusion and freedom of expression is the ability to create, consume, produce, and distribute digital material. They also include the freedom to utilize communication networks, technological devices, and computers. the right to use the Internet and the freedom to communicate and express ideas online. With the creation of the UDHR, more precise international human rights norms of both a binding and non-binding nature were developed. Human rights standards aim to state generally applicable principles as concepts and situations change. The growth of human rights standards is not based on a basic premise. Instead, it is believed that the fundamental ideas underlying human rights are universal and unalienable, however, they may need to be interpreted in the context of recent advancements.

Human rights agreements are rarely renegotiated these days. A fundamental basic human right is the ability to communicate. Only when a right's enjoyment is necessary for the enjoyment of all other rights are rights considered fundamental. Other rights may also need to be given up in order to protect a basic right, making the enjoyment of certain rights impossible if doing so would violate another. The necessity for communication among people, both on an individual and societal level, and the inherent communication abilities of humans are the sources of the right to communicate. But it wasn't until a great technical advance that communication was understood to be a fundamental human right. The growth of the Internet challenges conventional ideas about information rights, including privacy,

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[29] Efroni, Zohar, 'The present', Access-Right: The Future of Digital Copyright Law (2010; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Jan. 2011), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199734078.003.0007, accessed 6 Mar. 2023.

freedom of expression, copyright, universal access, and variety in culture, language, and minority groups. Humans have employed more complex technologies throughout history to increase their capacity for communication. Consequently, technology and communication interact with human rights in a multifaceted way (McIver and Birdsall, 2002).[30]

Communication rights are changing from specialized rights articulated as restricted freedoms to a complete and positive right to communicate as communication technologies develop into more complex worldwide networks.

Technical descriptions of human rights frequently concentrate on the particulars of laws and systems for the rule of law, including constitutional documents, national legislation, and international instruments, their multi-layered nature, how they interact with one another, and how they function in detail in particular circumstances. Nonetheless, a succinct explanation of the guiding ideas and procedures that guide the development of international human rights standards is required. The United Nations Charter does not define " human rights and fundamental freedoms " but the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides some key concepts. Internet access is a fundamental right that cannot be restricted by the government in any way. The Internet has a positive impact on states' sovereignty under international law. The term "international legal sovereignty" may be used to describe sovereignty at first. The World Wide Web (WWW)[31], which may be a useful instrument for nations to receive and encourage international communication, has a favorable influence on states' sovereignty.

The Internet expands the audience beyond them and gives governments more influence by enabling them to equally reach people, national capitals, international organizations, and multinational enterprises. It is handy to add that the Internet also gives States the freedom to choose how they want to be acknowledged, in addition to being a beneficial instrument for individual nations to expand and deepen worldwide recognition through self-promotion on the international stage. According to Brunn and Cottle,[32] sovereign nations may "create" their

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[30] McIver, W. (2002). [PDF] Technological Evolution and the Right to Communicate: The Implications for Electronic Democracy | Semantic Scholar. https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Technological-Evolution-and-the-Right-to-The-for-McIver-Birdsall/22627986ed66535d887f84a58f54f9cef0725129

[31] Tim Berners-Lee: WorldWideWeb, the first Web client. (n.d.). https://www.w3.org/People/Berners-Lee/WorldWideWeb.html

[32] Small States and Cyber Boosterism on JSTOR. (n.d.). https://www.jstor.org/stable/216007

desired identities by manipulating the information that is available online, for instance. In actuality, nations may choose who and what they want to promote to the rest of the world in an area called the web. For instance, a state with many different cultures would want to highlight its multicultural nature.

The World Wide Web (WWW) simultaneously has advantageous and harmful effects on the state's sovereignty as a basic aspect of its role. While nations may use the Internet as a tool to strengthen and advance their standing internationally, doing so also represents a severe invasion of sovereignty. That makes it far more challenging for nations to oversee and manage cross-border transactions and, eventually, those that take place on their sovereign territory. The employment of such technologies by state and non-state actors currently poses a significant threat to democracies as well as activists in authoritarian environments. The employment of social media platforms is not limited to or particularly centered on political mobilization. As they have integrated themselves into society, they have changed every aspect of social, cultural, and political life. Nowadays, it is nearly hard to even recall a period when people did not get news, discuss ideas, or engage with popular culture via social media, especially in an area where the young predominate.

During the 2011 uprisings, public-facing applications like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube dominated the scene. Since then, new applications are consistently released and quickly become popular. WhatsApp and Telegram, with their blends of huge groups for in-network semi-public sharing and discourse and encrypted one-to-one contact; Clubhouse with its live audio talks; TikTok, whose lighthearted videos may quickly transition into a political statement. For creative activists, ostensibly apolitical applications may swiftly take on political functions, which enhances the motivation for authoritarian regimes to control and oppress people. The greater the power of digital communications became understood by autocrats, the more they attempted to utilize it and shape it for their own ends. Middle Eastern governments began to see social media as a significant potential danger and, as a result, substantially invested in methods to regulate, monitor, and influence online behavior. These regimes were primarily concerned with averting threats to their own existence. The push for digital authoritarianism manifested itself in a variety of ways, including the colonization of the online public through manipulation, untruthful behavior, and influence operations; surveillance of the online public through big data analysis, spyware, and tracking apps; silencing of the online public through de-platforming, content moderation, and targeted

repression of influential voices; Increasing of repression through information operations and surveillance.

Hence, the prevalence of both socially mediated digital communication and transnational digital authoritarianism has changed the public sphere in the MENA region.

To conclude, Internet access and social media networks have had a positive impact on recent changes in the Middle East despite a variety of other circumstances such as government suppression. the use of social media as a means of communication and the protection of data privacy to be a fundamental right, the state is the responsible entity to ensure fundamental rights not the tool of authoritarian. Internet rights are basic human rights that are required to guarantee the preservation of people's rights online. These liberties include freedom of speech, privacy, information access, the right to assemble, involvement in public life, and digital constitutionalism. These rights must be safeguarded and defended as the Internet becomes more and more important to our daily lives. Governments, businesses, and other parties must acknowledge the significance of these rights and make efforts to keep the Internet a free and open forum for the discussion of ideas and the sharing of knowledge. However, people must be aware of their rights and take action to protect them, such as employing tools to avoid censorship and surveillance, speaking out for digital rights, and online political activism that is civil.

1.3 Freedom of Expression

The Internet has created both new opportunities and obstacles for free expression. The Internet is distinguished by the freedom and openness it provides to its users. During the last 10 years, countries all over the world have seen a major fall in freedom of expression, but the Middle East has been at the forefront of this trend. In recent years, certain Arab regimes have begun to squeeze the one platform where citizens might formerly criticize social media. The public's reaction to the new restrictions has been mixed. Everyone has the freedom to organize and participate in online and offline protests using the Internet. According to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression and it is essential in any society for the enjoyment of other human rights and everyone should have the freedom to share and publish information freely

on the Internet without censorship or other interference".[33] These concepts of information freedom, free flow of ideas, and mass communication are important principles in worldwide human rights and freedom of speech norms. The ideals of information freedom, free flow of information, and mass communication that already apply to the Internet are now explicitly applied to it. The United Nations Human Rights Council recently passed a resolution on freedom of expression and assembly.

The goals that keep human rights together are simple. Human rights and basic freedoms are everyone's inheritance and apply equally to everyone, wherever. Everyone has the right to exercise their rights wherever they are, and governments must guarantee that these rights are respected, safeguarded, and promoted. These principles undergird all human rights norms, expressed or implicit, and are regularly reiterated by the Unite right to access information online and the issue of free expression are both very critical. This is largely due to the fact that religion and tradition in the Middle East and North Africa are not only powerful but also vital, and they have shaped social development tendencies over many centuries. At the same time, the issue of human rights in general, and the right to knowledge and freedom of speech in particular, is relatively new to the society.

The value of freedom of speech has increased significantly as a result of the Internet's potential as an interactive and international medium. The commitments nations have made to uphold human rights have expanded at the same time. According to the established case law of the European Court of Human Rights, "freedom of speech provides one of the main foundations for a democratic society and one of the primary conditions for its progress and for each individual's self-fulfillment".[34] If the freedom of expression is democracy's breath, then the Internet is the environment in which individuals live, breathe, and exercise that freedom. If the Internet remains open, governments are concerned about losing sovereignty to regulate the sort of content, ideas, opinions, or information that their citizens can access or exchange online.

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[33] OHCHR. (n.d.-c). Universal Declaration of Human Rights. https://www.ohchr.org/en/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

[34] European Court of Human Rights. (2021, November 1). International Justice Resource Center. https://ijrcenter.org/european-court-of-human-rights/

Meanwhile, new Internet-based technologies that allow governments to monitor Internet connections and content have been created. This has raised the need for processes to protect the identity, which some nations may seek to restrict. Anonymizers and virtual private networks are two examples (VPNs). freedom of expression and the ability to receive and exchange information online raise both traditional and contemporary problems. freedom of expression has been used to criticize government officials. Internet service providers and others must also respect, preserve, and promote free expression. the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Free Thought and Expression[35] stressed the importance of this new kind of freedom of speech, which enables people and groups to enjoy a number of other fundamental rights and freedoms, is freedom of expression. In accordance with international human rights legislation and norms, the Human Rights Council established the Special Rapporteur's duty to safeguard and advance freedom of speech both offline and online.

The Council of Europe adopted a Statement on the Freedom of Internet Communication.[36] The underlying concept was that freedom of expression was too narrow to encompass all forms of global communication and that a right to communication might have a greater reach, including interactive communication in particular. The proposal of such a right prompted controversy because non-governmental organizations were concerned that it would compromise advances in the field of free expression. The authorities permitted the formation of political parties but put various restrictions on their activities, and the secret service

constantly monitored them. The press has had more independence since the late 1980s, although the government has maintained censorship (Franklin, 2008)[37]. Among the liberties included in this clause is the right to diversity, the right to innovation and creation without disturbance or blockage of new technologies, the right to initiate any assembly or association, the right to work, etc.

According to Jansen (2010), social groups that actively express themselves or engage in the online activity are organized as digital activists to advance social movements and bring about

[35] OHCHR. (n.d.-b). Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression. https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-freedom-of-opinion-and-expression

[36] Declaration on freedom of communication on the Internet. (n.d.). https://rm.coe.int/16805dfbd5

[37] Franklin, B., & Eldridge, S., II. (2016). The Routledge Companion to Digital Journalism Studies. Taylor & Francis

social change.[38] Restrictions on users' freedom are imposed by law, the necessity to respect the rights or reputations of others, as well as by considerations of national security, public order, public health, or morals. Thus, the concept of freedom in an authoritarian regime is not clearly defined because they prefer blind submission of citizens to their authority without question.

Everyone has the freedom to access the Internet without any type of restriction. This includes freedom from any measures aimed to scare Internet users or stifle online expression, as well as freedom from cyber assaults and online abuse. The Internet has developed into an essential medium for the exercise of one's right to free expression, enabling one to disseminate knowledge, concepts, viewpoints, and opinions to a large audience. Also, technology has made it possible for online communities based on similar interests, opinions, and values to form.

Governments imposed Internet censorship, invested in digital monitoring technology, and passed new laws, drastically curtailing people's freedom of speech. Civil society groups' activities have been deemed illegal. Regional security officers used illegal force to put a stop to peaceful protests. Civil society organizations' activities are currently prohibited. The region's security forces used illegal force to put an end to peaceful protests. To conclude, The authoritarian context and the security pretext shackle the march of freedom and human rights throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Human rights advocates in the Middle East and North Africa are facing an onslaught of arrests and convictions to curtail their freedom of speech. These brave campaigners are at risk because of too broad and ambiguous rules that favor the government and promote the stifling of criticism and the incarceration of activists. Importantly, authorities across the area are using allegations of spreading disinformation and fake news to impose draconian jail terms.

1.4 Privacy on the Internet

The right to privacy is essential to the upkeep of a democratic society. It is fundamental to maintaining human dignity, and according to Article 12 of the UDHR, "no one has permission to interfere with their private, family, home, or communication, Additionally,

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[38] Jansen, F. (2010). Digital activism in the Middle East: mapping issue networks in Egypt, Iran, Syria and Tunisia. Knowledge Management for Development Journal, 6(1), 37–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/19474199.2010.493854

everyone is entitled to protection. In the digital age, the right to privacy encompasses settings for privacy, freedom from surveillance, and the right to safe Internet connections. the right to use encryption, the right to virtual personality, and the right to data protection". Discussions about the right to privacy have to date received little attention in the Middle East; these rights are viewed as a threat to the regime. Everyone has the right to view the data that pertains to them and to request its correction or erasure for justifiable reasons. Due to the proliferation of online spy tools, privacy is being increasingly violated across the Middle East. Thus, the recognition of rights on the Internet must be based on full respect for each individual's dignity, freedom, equality, and diversity, which serve as fundamental principles to balance it with other rights.

According to Article 7 of the Declaration of Internet Rights,[39] everyone's information technology systems and devices and the freedom and confidentiality of their electronic information and communications are inviolable. Exceptions are permitted only in the circumstances and manner prescribed by law, and with the prior approval of the courts. People have a right to preserve their privacy and there are indirect kinds of inequality and unfreedom that can erode even the most democratic political rights so it must be directly combated by using one's right to privacy. The right to access information has been significantly altered by changes in national legislation, some of which have even made it into individual countries' constitutions, as a result of political developments. However, these amendments seem to have complicated the right to access information.

A fundamental human right is the right to privacy. However, when governments in the region rush to implement new digital technologies that gather and handle the personal data of millions of their inhabitants, such as digital IDs, biometric e-passports and driving licenses, or e-government services, they fail to protect citizens. Instead, national legislators and policymakers are moving in the opposite direction, enacting repressive legislation and policies, such as cybercrime measures and anti-terrorism legislation, that seek to criminalize online expression and convert the Internet into a heavily watched and surveilled area.

Data protection laws are still broken across the (MENA) region, and in nations where they don't exist or have any laws with little attention to privacy. To integrate cyberlaw across the Arab World, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) released

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[39] Brown, G. (2016). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the 21st Century: A Living Document in a Changing World. Open Book Publishers.

a series of directives on cyber laws in 2012. One of these directives focused on protecting personal data.[40]the Personal Data Protection Directive emphasizes the significance of building a legislative framework that supports the responsible and ethical use of personal data while simultaneously preserving individual privacy and security. Personal data is a valuable asset in the digital era, and its collection, processing, and storage can have important ramifications for individuals' privacy, security, and rights, according to the regulation. As a result, the Personal Data Directive highlights the significance of creating clear norms and regulations for personal data protection, which are required to foster trust and confidence in online transactions and services.

The lack of legal data protection safeguards gives the space for authoritarian governments to violate data protection principles, gives agencies more control over their personal information, and does not give people anyway to complain and redress when such violations occur making it possible for state and non-state actors to violate privacy and data protection laws. However, the region's current legal and regulatory frameworks are still insufficient. As a result, the personal information of millions of citizens is continuously exploited for commercial gain by private companies, as well as by governments for political repression, surveillance, and the repression of free speech, all in the name of thwarting terrorism and crime or protecting national security.

Even worse, it seems that in certain situations, national data protection law proposals are not being made primarily to uphold the rights of individuals, but rather to pave the way for financial investment in the big data sector. To assess the present regulatory and legislative framework on privacy and data protection, we will focus on Egypt and Tunisia to offer an overview of the current condition of data protection in the MENA area by looking at current instances of privacy infractions and data breaches committed by authoritarian regimes in those nations. Privacy online is a critical issue in the Middle East and North Africa region, where governments and non-state actors frequently monitor and impose restrictions on online activities. The region has a complex political and social landscape, and different countries in the region have different levels of Internet freedom and privacy protection.

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[40] ESCWA. (2017, March 08). Regional Harmonization of Cyber Legislation to Promote Knowledge Society in the Arab World. Retrieved January 08, 2021, from
https://www.unescwa.org/publications/brochure-cyberlegislation-arab-world

1.5 Participation in public and political life

Along with the fulfillment of human rights, participation in political and public life is essential for socially inclusive growth. The proliferation of Internet-based technology makes it possible to convey ideas and demands instantaneously and cheaply to everyone. The term connective action refers to the use of the Internet as a means of involvement in and of itself, rather than just a new technique to mobilize individuals. (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013)[41] Political participant modes such as online "clicktivism" involvement have become increasingly popular because of the tremendous growth of political activities over the last few decades and the advent of the Internet. In essence, everyone has the right to engage in political activity of any kind. Political engagement can help create a thriving democracy without rejecting upcoming developments. Indeed, people have a right to preserve their privacy. Individuals' political rights can be protected and made democratic by exercising their right to free association, expression, and association. According to Weber (1949, p. 105)[42] science develops as a result of the "constant struggle" between "the intellectual equipment that the past has produced" and "new information which we can and desire to extract from reality."

Online political involvement surely turned into a tense tool for authoritarian nations as the repertoire of political participation keeps expanding through the growth of the Internet over the past ten years, (Lerner,2010)[43] is based on the idea that the Internet can be used to inspire people to take real-world political action. As a new technology with a short timeline, social media presents its own set of issues. There are several social networking platforms accessible. Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest, and Foursquare are some of the largest and most popular social networking sites in 2012. Twitter, the social media service that will be utilized in this investigation, was founded on July 15, 2006. That is where the future of social media began. Social media sites offer expanded networking and conversation capabilities that are not inherent in ordinary Internet use. Social media, on the other hand, not only provides that service, but also tracks and connects similar persons, hobbies, and information digitally

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[41] Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2013). The logic of connective action: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics. Cambridge University Press.

[42] Zaret, D. (1980). From Weber to Parsons and Schutz: The eclipse of history in modern social theory. American Journal of Sociology, 85(5), 1180-1201.

[43] Lerner, J. S., & Tiedens, L. Z. (2006). Portrait of The Angry Decision Maker: How Appraisal Tendencies Shape Anger's Influence on Cognition. Journal of Behavioral Decision Making, 19(2), 115–137

so there is a darker vision known as "electronic flies"[44] has emerged. These pests are the most dangerous for online political participants using the Internet, and they represent the false accounts and electronic battalions run by the oppressive government to incite people to spread lies and slander to further its objectives of toxic and malicious

On social networking platforms, users may join groups, discover who is attending scheduled events, connect with others or be linked in photographs or messages, join community page forums, express preferences, receive automatic suggestions, and much more. To simplify matters, imagine social media as an infinite spider web with unlimited links to individuals, groups, hobbies, events, and information. Every new interaction links and interacts with every other related strand in a more complicated and unexpected manner. Participation in public and political life is a complicated and varied subject in the MENA region that is influenced by a variety of social, cultural, and political elements. Even while the region has recently made some strides in encouraging increased political engagement, there are still big obstacles to overcome. The limited room for civil society organizations and the media to function freely in the MENA area is one of the major obstacles to political involvement.

Numerous nations in the region have stringent laws and rules that limit access to information, freedom of speech, and the operations of Non-governmental organizations(NGOs). This may make it challenging for people to organize and take part in political activities and may limit access to making wise political judgments. Women and other marginalized groups in the area continue to face major obstacles to political engagement due to gender-based discrimination and unequal access to resources and opportunities. Women are frequently underrepresented in politics and public life, and they confront institutional and cultural barriers that prevent them from actively participating in politics.

To sum up, the MENA appears hesitant to participate in politics because of a violation of human rights. It is clear that perceived rights to participate in politics and society, by many Arab publics, are restricted. According to that The populace of the MENA has come up with other tools to voice their issues on politics and society. Both younger and older generations frequently use the Internet to participate in politics but with an atmosphere of fear.

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[44] Bensoula, N. (2020, June 1). Electronic flies and public opinion. ResearchGate.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341946059_Electronic_flies_and_public_opinion/citations

1.6 Digital constitutionalism

The concept of digital governance institutions emphasizes the need for new forms of digital governance and regulation. These organizations can help to ensure that digital technologies are used in ways that benefit society as a whole, rather than just a few powerful actors, by promoting fundamental rights and democratic principles. Applying constitutional concepts to the digital sphere to uphold individual rights and advance democratic principles is known as "digital constitutionalism".[45] The restricted room for civil society and the media to function freely in the MENA area is one of the major obstacles to digital constitutionalism. Many nations in the region have stringent laws and rules that censor online content, limit access to information, and restrict freedom of expression. This can hinder the ability of civil society and the ability of individuals to exercise their fundamental rights online.

Digital technology has the unique power to facilitate communication, but it has also generated new sources of risks to our fundamental rights. Indeed, utilizing digital technological devices increases the risk of processing our data, and it is not restricted to governmental actors, but it also gives non-state actors, such as large multinational corporations and transnational organizations, As a consequence, these changes can be broadly understood as a shift in the constitutional equilibrium. According to Rikke Jorgensen[46] digital democracy and digital citizenship is pertinent because it emphasizes the necessity for digital governance systems that are accountable, transparent, and responsive to citizens' interests. Jorgensen highlights the necessity of citizen participation in digital governance, as well as the need for effective ways to keep digital governance entities responsible.

The limited room for civil society organizations and the media to function freely in the MENA area is one of the major obstacles to political involvement. Numerous nations in the region have stringent laws and rules that limit access to information, freedom of speech, and the operations of NGOs. This may make it challenging for people to organize and take part in political activities and may limit access to making wise political judgments.

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[45] Celeste, E., & Celeste, E. (2022, February 23). What is digital constitutionalism? — The Digital Constitutionalist. The Digital Constitutionalist — the Future of Constitutionalism. https://digi-con.org/what-is-digital-constitutionalism/
[46] Jørgensen, R. F. (2014). Participation in the Internet era. Reclaiming the Public Sphere: Communication, Power and Social Change, 151-166.

Communication rights[47] are becoming increasingly relevant in the digital age since more and more communication takes place online. Yet, online communication introduces additional problems with communication rights protection, such as the dissemination of misinformation and the misuse of personal data. The transformation toward alternative forms of digital sovereignty competing with neoliberal approaches has been made easier by the growth of authoritarian splinters and the greater control of the Internet inside the Middle East. the ability of the authoritarian regime to independently manage information and communications technology or to endanger the political, economic, and social security of other nations by using crucial infrastructure, core technologies, and other advantages.

Digital sovereignty[48] refers to a country's ability to govern and manage its own digital environment and infrastructure, including the movement of data and information. While historically associated with authoritarian regimes, it is now being adopted by an increasing number of countries wanting to express their independence and preserve their digital interests in a globalized and interconnected world. The conflict over Internet governance extends beyond the various approaches used by various regimes to the crucial role the private sector plays in overseeing the infrastructure and online services. Although the Internet has long been regarded as a democratic platform, it has never served as a neutral ground for constitutionalism. Constitutionalism in Internet governance is crucial for maintaining fundamental rights such as privacy, freedom of expression, and access to information. Constitutionalism can help to ensure that the Internet is utilized in ways that benefit society and promote the public interest by providing explicit legal frameworks that emphasize these principles. First, to protect fundamental rights, and second, to limit the emergence of powers beyond constitutional control. In this light, constitutionalism expresses values that are critical in the digital age. In the new era of Internet governance, more opportunities to exercise fundamental rights emerge, as do more threats to interfere with them.

Constitutional control and safeguards for fundamental rights and freedoms must coexist and work together in Internet governance. Constitutional control provides a legal framework to

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[47] Horowitz, Nieminen, & Schejter. (2020, May 1). Introduction: Communication Rights in the Digital Age. Scholarly Publishing Collective. https://scholarlypublishingcollective.org/psup/information-policy/article/doi/10.5325/jinfopoli.10.2020.0299/314439/Introduction-Communication-Rights-in-the-Digital

[48] Internet Society. (2023, February 10). Exploring Digital Sovereignty - Internet Society. https://www.internetsociety.org/action-plan/digital-sovereignty/

protect these rights, while safeguards ensure their implementation and enforcement. The fragmentation of the digital environment as a result of new Internet governance trends can have an impact on the exercise of rights and freedoms. Network splintering, polarization, and hybridization highlight the extent to which applying diverse sets of rules and assurances may erode individual protection. Fragmentation and division can advance the illiberal agenda and strengthen a central power, overshadowing personal liberties and other fundamental ideals and principles such as the rule of law. Simultaneously, in the Middle East, digital platforms may elect to filter specific types of information and penalize people who violate their own community standards. Users are no longer adequately safeguarded against infractions across services when each platform creates its own regulations, nor can they benefit from equitable remedies. Despite the regulatory push over the last decade, the practice of rights and freedoms online is still constrained by what platforms allow on a technological and ideological level. Technical, legal, and policy fragmentation can actively prohibit or restrict particular Internet applications, affecting the enjoyment of rights. When the digital protection of rights and freedoms begins to resemble the splinternet as a result of jurisdictional and Internet choices, the political divide becomes a new problem.

The fear of the Internet being fragmented is nothing new. Such efforts, which are sometimes referred to as authoritarian regimes, have depended on the creation of stringent national regulations, content filtering, and online activity monitoring. The move to alternative forms of digital sovereignty competing with neoliberal approaches has been made easier by the growth of authoritarian splinters and the growing control of the Internet within national borders. The public use of the Internet has frequently been restricted in nations where surveillance and information control are pervasive, such as the Arab States, resulting in the stringent monitoring of data and/or the banning of specific online services.[49]

In general, promoting digital constitutionalism in the MENA region will necessitate addressing structural obstacles that restrict the space for the Internet, raising awareness of digital rights and their significance for democracy and human rights, and assisting in the

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[49] J Zittrain and others, 'The Shifting Landscape of Global Internet Censorship' (2017) Berkman Klein
Center Research Publication No 2017-4; R Deibert and others, Access Denied: The Practice and Policy of Global Internet Filtering (MIT Press 2008).

creation of legal frameworks and regulatory mechanisms that protect digital rights and advance democratic values.

Chapter II Internet rights in the constitutions in Egypt

This chapter examines the Internet from utopia to dystopia in Egypt. Whereas the Internet was once envisioned as a new utopia, a space full of creative opportunities, grassroots democratic access, and the free exchange of ideas, it is now increasingly becoming a violent space that breeds violence and oppressive in our societies by a dark point called censorship that is described as a severe violation of human rights. What appeared to save and revitalize democracy at the turn of the millennium is today considered its enemy. The Internet has had a substantial impact on political areas during the previous few years.

The protection of online rights has emerged as a critical component of human rights as the Internet becomes more and more essential to our daily lives. The use of digital surveillance technology and limits on free speech have been issued for Egypt's Internet rights. Concerns have been raised concerning Egypt's Internet freedom situation and citizens' capacity to fully exercise their Internet rights as a result of these difficulties. Egypt has undergone a series of legislative advancements in recent years that have been primarily focused on attempting to set organizational and procedural standards for the advancement of technology and the use of information technology by both individuals and businesses.

These legal changes are in line with the idea that as technology advances, laws must be developed to safeguard and promote people's rights to their private lives and personal information, as well as to provide victims of rights abuses with recourse. Indeed, social media use has been associated with the growth of political protest in numerous places all over the world. On the other hand, digital authoritarianism has a high human cost through an alarming rise in human rights violations, and there are rising fears about the worldwide collapse of democracy and the advent of digital authoritarianism.[50]

The government has curtailed digital rights in Egypt through a range of tactics, including the use of new technology to block websites, the legalization of censorship and monitoring

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[50] Washington Dc, A. C. (2022, February 3). Mapping Digital Authoritarianism in the Arab World. Arab Center Washington DC.
https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/mapping-digital-authoritarianism-in-the-arab-world/

activities, and the dissemination of narratives that undermine legitimate digital speech. Thus, Egyptian security forces monitor online speech using crude tactics such as device seizures, social media platform monitoring, and informant networks. Security officials often target Facebook demonstrations, particularly at times of high political stress. Videos are also commonly targeted due to their ease of sharing and availability. Increasing digital repression in Egypt matched larger human rights crackdowns, which saw the Arab world's greatest decreases in Internet freedom. Censorship of online material has reached an all-time high, with a record number of countries prohibiting political, social, or religious content, frequently targeting information sources located outside of their borders.

Anti-democratic practices are not the main reason for the Internet's splintering into national divisions. Some countries cultivate a domestic digital ecosystem in which state-endorsed narratives predominate and independent media, civil society, and marginalized voices are more readily silenced. The expanding fragmentation of the Internet has major implications for fundamental rights such as freedom of speech, access to information, and privacy, particularly for persons living under authoritarian governments or in backward democracies.

Since 2011, Egypt has seen the most significant human rights crackdown in history. The recently passed legislation[51] to protect the right to privacy was ill-advised because it ignored the urgent need to review legislation, court rulings, and other administrative decisions that constitute a significant part of Egypt's legislative framework and limit the effectiveness of the constitutional protection that is provided for it. Thousands of political activists have been imprisoned, and protests have been criminalized by the authoritarian state. Because of the violence and restrictions on human rights, alternative political voices have been compelled to rely on Internet platforms like Twitter and Facebook to express themselves. Egypt has turned its attention to these platforms, and the government has restricted digital rights in Egypt through a variety of censorship, including the deployment of new technologies to block websites, the legalization of censorship and surveillance practices, Bloggers and print

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[51] S. (2021b, September 9). The Right to Privacy in Egyptian Laws.. Legislative Obstacles and Unfinished Steps. Masaar. https://masaar.net/en/the-right-to-privacy-in-egyptian-laws-legislative-obstacles-and-unfinished-steps/

journalists alike were arrested and incarcerated for crossing what the Egyptian state saw as red lines, frequently for indeterminate periods without trial. (HRW 2010).[52]

In the next section, I will examine the various legal frameworks and clauses of the Egyptian Constitution that pertain to Internet rights. Egyptians who seek to exercise their Internet rights confront a number of challenges, including rigorous censorship and monitoring rules, limited access to specific websites and platforms, and regular Internet outages. These restrictions severely impede Egyptians' capacity to obtain information, freely express themselves, and exercise their fundamental rights in the digital sphere, such as censorship of online speech and the use of monitoring tools. Egypt uses the Internet as an authoritarian tool, implying that the Internet may be doing more harm than good by focusing on limiting freedom of speech on the Egyptian Internet.

2.1 A brief history of Internet censorship in Egypt

This section aims to analyze the connection between censorship and the authoritarian regime in Egypt. Internet censorship in Egypt has a long history that reflects the battle for freedom of expression and privacy on the Internet. The poor position of journalists and media employees working in Egypt reflects the enormous impact of malpractice on the country's media and press freedom. Egypt's media is controlled by the state.

The Egyptian government passed a new law in 2003 to regulate Internet usage in Egypt (Telecommunication Regulation Law No. 10 of 2003).[53] The law grants the government broad powers to monitor and intercept electronic communications and requires service providers to comply with government requests for user data and content filtering. The telecommunication law allows the government to restrict websites, monitor online interactions, and Internet filtering in Egypt has remained a significant problem ever since this law was passed. The government has employed a variety of methods to restrict access to

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[52] Simpson, G. (2021, September 6). "I Wanted to Lie Down and Die." Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/02/11/i-wanted-lie-down-and-die/trafficking-and-torture-eritreans-sudan-and-egypt

[53] Telecommunication Regulation Laws. (n.d.-c). https://www.tra.gov.eg/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Law-No-10-of-2003.pdf

websites, including deep packet inspection (DPI), keyword filtering, and blocking entire domains.[54]

During president Hosni Mubarak's era from October 14, 1981, to February 11, 2011, the introduction of satellite television offered an uncensored alternative to otherwise government-owned and -regulated media. This pluralistic media scene also manifested itself in the birth of many small opposition newspapers in Egypt alongside the three semi-official dailies: Al Ahram, Al Akhbar, and Al Gomhoria which gives evidence of the shift from total state ownership and total state control to individual or group control and private ownership, hence boosting media plurality and diversity. The Egyptian government exercises strict control over the media, including state-owned newspapers, television channels, and news agencies. This control allows the government to shape public opinion, suppress opposition voices, and limit access to information, particularly on sensitive political issues. Traditional media has always worked primarily in support of the authoritarian governments in power since its origin. Therefore young people prefer to use the Internet as a new social media network and new communication platforms have opened up exciting new possibilities and opened up new horizons. These platforms have given a predominantly young generation, as well as various other Egyptian society constituents, such as activists, bloggers, and independent media outlets, the ability to express their views, organize protests and social movements, and disseminate information without relying on traditional state-controlled media. Access to alternative information sources allows individuals to seek out diverse perspectives and more inclusive spaces for engagement.[55]

The Public in Egypt is now more connected, knowledgeable, and powerful than ever before. There is a complicated interaction between media and politics in the context of the upheavals in Egypt. New forms of online social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, meant that a new arena became available in which the public could express views, ideas, and criticism. It is necessary to examine a wide range of issues that emerged during the uprisings and throughout the transitional period in a post-revolutionary context while also connecting these

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[54] False Freedom: Online Censorship in the Middle East and North Africa: Egypt. (n.d.). https://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/mena1105/4.htm

[55] Khamis, S. (2011). The Transformative Egyptian Media Landscape: Changes, Challenges and Comparative Perspectives. International Journal of Communication, 5, 19. https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/813

developments to pivotal historical moments that impacted the functioning of social media and shaped the experience of the Arab spring.

Following the revolution of January 25, 2011, after more than three decades, Mohamed Morsi was elected as Egypt's first democratically elected president.[56] He started an effort that pledged justice for the 'martyrs' of the revolution. He pledged political inclusivity and freedom of speech. Then since 2013 Egypt's president, Abdul Fattah al-Sisi has been in power, a year after he led the military's overthrow of President Mohamed Morsi after major demonstrations against his regime.[57] As soon as the media began to focus on broader political and economic concerns, President al-Sisi orchestrated the intelligence intrusion as a response. To lessen the power of their private and independent owners, new businesses and media outlets are first launched, and subsequently existing private media are acquired.

Figure 1(Egyptian Media Group)

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[56] Amnesty International UK. (2013, April 29). Egypt after the 2011 revolution. https://www.amnesty.org.uk/egypt-after-2011-revolution

[57] BBC News. (2020, December 1). Egypt President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi: Ruler with an iron grip. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-19256730

The Egyptian Media Group (EMG)[58] was created in 2016 by a businessman with significant unidentified foreign funding. His presence was already seen at the time as a General Intelligence proxy investing substantially in the media sector. EMG also bought Synergy Productions' majority-controlling stake. The General Intelligence Agency's influence over the privately held media landscape was increased by the EMG's conclusion of a dozen acquisitions in the TV sector, Egyptian Media Group was able to purchase the ON TV network. The Falcon Group, which has ties to military intelligence, previously held the Al Hayah TV network, which Egyptian Media Group said it had purchased in July 2018. The Egyptian Media Group, which is owned by Eagle Capital has grown to be Egypt's largest media conglomerate between 2016 and 2018, is either directly state-owned or state-controlled, and the intelligence services have even acquired independent media outlets through it. The State is still the primary TV owner in the nation, and the Egyptian Media Group's purchases of TV networks have further strengthened the power of those who support the government to sway public opinion. Deeper centralization results from its ownership of two TV networks (CBC and ON), five print publications and their digital counterparts, a video platform (Dot Masr), and seven companies in the advertising and marketing industry. Egyptian Media Group is active in print, broadcast, and digital media, as well as technology, content creation, marketing, and security. Egyptian Media Group[59] stated in September 2018 that it has purchased 51% of the stock of Future Media Holding Group, the company in charge of the CBC network channels. Additionally, neither the Egyptian press nor television covered any criticism of the modifications. The weekly newspaper Ain Al Mshaheer was purchased by the Egyptian Media Group. The Egyptian Media Group reportedly sacked several journalists from Sout Al Ouma and Ain Al Mshaheer at the beginning of 2017. Egyptian.

So freedom of expression in the press and Tv sector become the most tightly controlled forms of expression, subject to numerous restrictions, in the form of laws, regulations, and state institutions charged with enforcing these social, in the form of constraints imposed by mainstream culture, especially when the subject addresses one of the three historically contentious topics of politics, religion, or sex. Indeed, all of that evidence explains deeper centralization follows, creating it impossible for the opposition to communicate via these

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[58] Egypt. (n.d.). Media Ownership Monitor. https://www.mom-gmr.org/en/countries/egypt/

[59] Egypt. (n.d.). Media Ownership Monitor. https://www.mom-gmr.org/en/countries/egypt/

traditional channels which results in people using the new social media platforms operating in a virtual environment, which does not require licensing, payment of insurance premiums, and other types of restriction. Since Egypt was one of the region's most developed nations in terms of Internet coverage and technology, experts pay particular attention to Egypt's cyberspace.

Egyptian authorities focus on attempts to regulate the Internet or prohibit its users from connecting by blocking instant messaging apps such as Signal.[60] Egypt has seen numerous political and societal transformations since the 2011 revolt. These developments have had a substantial offline and online influence on civic space. Digital rights are essentially human rights in online places that are acknowledged as critical. This timeline offers an overview of the most significant Internet censoring actions from 2011 until the present.

Before the 2011 uprising, the Mubarak regime frequently listened in on talks using mobile phones, email, and social networking sites.[61] As part of the government's dissent-control tactics in response to the 2011 Arab Spring protests, the majority of ISPs entirely reduced Internet service. Additionally, the Mubarak regime allegedly used Deep Packet Inspection (DPI) capabilities from Silicon Valley-based business Narus, a Boeing subsidiary. As a result of calls for demonstrations in Tahrir Square on January 25, 2011, the authorities suspended Facebook and Twitter in January 2011. The government did not frequently block websites at that time, but the 28 January cutoff of Internet and telecommunication services across all of Egypt was the most notable occurrence of that year.[62] Since then, the state has given the Internet considerable attention. It began by methodically banning websites, and then it introduced legislation to legitimize the activity, such as the Anti-Cybercrime Law and the Press and Media Regulation Law.

[60] Egypt restricts access to encrypted messaging app Signal. (n.d.). Hot For Security. https://www.bitdefender.co.uk/blog/hotforsecurity/egypt-restricts-access-to-encrypted-messaging-app-signal/

[61] Marquis-Boire, M. (2017, July 10). Summary Analysis of Blue Coat "Countries of Interest." The Citizen Lab. https://citizenlab.ca/2013/01/appendix-a-summary-analysis-of-blue-coat-countries-of-interest/

[62] Van Beijnum, I. (2011, January 30). How Egypt did (and your government could) shut down the Internet. Ars Technica. https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2011/01/how-egypt-or-how-your-government-could-shut-down-the-internet/

The Egyptian government's ongoing attempts to censor websites and limit access to information online are blatant violations of international and national constitutional principles as well as the 19 provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),[63] which Egypt has ratified. Egypt's government blocked access to websites like Twitter and Facebook[64] to stop social media from being used to incite unrest. The government might require Internet providers to filter out services or restrict websites. The government may have instructed the military to seize communications hubs, causing the blocking. Meanwhile, Anonymous, a group of hackers who attack targets they perceive as authoritarian or unpopular, launched attacks against Egyptian government websites in retaliation.[65]

In 2011, the most prolonged regime in the Middle East and North Africa at the time, Hosni Mubarak was finally destroyed as a consequence of political mobilization that was significantly influenced by social media. The following regimes have not given digital rights and social media particular attention, and they have done everything in their power to restrict Internet access and target activists, whether through technical measures like censorship and surveillance of their online activities or through legislative tools like legalizing Internet shutdowns, banning websites, and criminalizing the right to free expression by branding anything that challenges the government as fake news.[66]

The Egyptian government started tightening its control over the information posted online at the start of the first decade of 2011,[67] as a result of the rise in Internet usage in Egypt and the expansion of the publication of political content that was critical of the government through blogs and social media websites. The Internet and social networks strongly impacted the

[63] OHCHR. (n.d.-b). International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights

[64] Brant, T. (2016, April 1). Unable to Spy on Its Users, Egypt Banned Facebook's Free Basics. PCMAG. https://www.pcmag.com/news/unable-to-spy-on-its-users-egypt-banned-facebooks-free-basics

[65] Anonymous 'hacktivists' attack Egyptian websites. (2011, January 26). NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna41280813

[66] Reaction Life. (2022, June 16). Ten Years Later – How the Arab Spring changed the world. Reaction. https://reaction.life/ten-years-later-how-the-arab-spring-changed-the-world/

[67] Arthur, C. (2017, November 26). Egypt blocks social media websites in an attempted clampdown on unrest. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jan/26/egypt-blocks-social-media-websites

political process. The events of January 28 are particularly significant because they offer hints for comprehending the more general link between "new" and "old" media and the growing popular movement for change in Egypt. Egyptian protestors have made extensive use of social media platforms to communicate with one another and the outside world about the events.

Despite Twitter being blocked by the Egyptian government[68]tweets from the Egyptian protests in Suez and Cairo offered real-time updates on protest activities. The arrest of bloggers, journalists, and activists has been another risky component of the Mubarak government's campaign of quiet and repression. Social networking tools have given activists a strong voice that is heard outside of Egypt. The primary method for promoting protests and locating demonstration sites has been Facebook. Internet from Egyptian servers was stopped nationwide, cutting off a crucial weapon for activists who rely on social media. Services for texting and mobile phones also appeared to be down or functioning erratically. Several Egyptians used software known as proxies to get past the blocking of social media platforms.

Following regimes have given digital rights and social media special attention, and they have done everything in their power to restrict Internet access and target activists, whether through technical means like censorship and surveillance of their online activities or through legislative tools like legalizing Internet shutdowns, banning websites, and criminalizing the right to free expression by branding anything that challenges the government as fake news.

According to Deibert (2009), the motives for Internet filtering methods span from national security concerns, cultural sensitivity[69], and the safeguarding of societal values to rent-seeking and the preservation of economic monopolies. Many reports from international organizations and research centers provide valuable insights into how digital platforms have shaped public discourse, facilitated social and political mobilization, and contributed to the democratization of public space in Egypt (Arab Social Media Report 2011; Bureau of

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[68] Science X. (2016, December 20). Maker of Signal says app is being blocked in Egypt. https://phys.org/news/2016-12-encrypted-messaging-app-egypt-blocking.html
[69] Deibert, R., Palfrey, J., Rohozinski, R., & Zittrain, J. (2008, January 1). Access Denied: The Practice and Policy of Global Internet Filtering (Information Revolution and Global. . . ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234795436_Access_Denied_The_Practice_and_Policy_of_Global_Internet_Filtering_Information_Revolution_and_Global_Politics

Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor 2016).[70] The high political promises have given way to political divisiveness, violence, and coups during the previous decade. Not only have the technology nations established the regional norm for digital surveillance, repression, and

control, but they have also provided considerable political, financial, and technical assistance and encouragement to their region's beleaguered or unstable authoritarian counterparts.

The repression of their population using digital censorship and information control technology. According to Freedom on the Net 2022.[71] Preventing an Authoritarian Internet Reform," a non-profit organization that does research and advocacy on democracy, political freedom, and human rights. The research emphasizes that the Internet is becoming increasingly divided and that governments are restricting Internet access and content, exerting greater control over online activity, and targeting human rights defenders, journalists, and other critical voices. Websites containing peaceful political, social, or religious material were prohibited by a record number of national governments, weakening the freedom of speech and the right to knowledge. The majority of these blockages specifically targeted foreign-based news outlets. With the centralization of technical infrastructure, the application of faulty rules to social media platforms, and the monitoring of user data, new national laws constituted an additional danger to the free flow of information.

The trend toward digital authoritarianism in Egypt receives critical support from outside the region, not only through authoritarian mega-powers like China and Russia's technology exports and cross-border information operations but also through the promiscuous transfer of spyware and other digital surveillance tools and expertise by private companies. According to Howard (2010), [72]Internet activism and involvement among Arab youth have generated a challenge to all forms of censorship. The practice of widespread surveillance relies on the

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[70] Reports – Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor - United States Department of State. (2022, September 6). United States Department of State. https://www.state.gov/reports-bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/

[71] Freedom House. (n.d.-a). Countering an Authoritarian Overhaul of the Internet. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2022/countering-authoritarian-overhaul-internet

[72] Taylor, M., Howard, J., & Lever, J. (2010). Citizen participation and civic activism in comparative perspective. Journal of Civil Society, 6(2), 145-164.

acquisition of spyware as well as the enactment of legislation enabling user monitoring and detention by security services.

In 2013, the American company Blue Coat Systems' proxySG software, which makes use of "deep packet inspection" technology, was bought by the Egyptian government. One of the most intrusive things a nation can do to its Internet is deep packet inspection. Governments examine the content of web traffic as it travels across the network using this technique, which is used by repressive regimes. This gives them the ability to ban websites in real time and to perform in-depth monitoring of their citizens' online activity. DPI installations are therefore often kept a secret for as long as feasible. With the use of this software, telecom service providers may learn a lot about customer behaviors including monitoring and geolocation. It continuously monitors and filters online content.[73]

In June 2014, the interior ministry announced the launch of a program to track security concerns on social media networks, signaling the government's intention to increase its spending on social media surveillance. By Decree No. 22 for the 2013–2014 fiscal year, this "project to measure the public opinion" was approved. The directive permits the ministry to utilize sophisticated software to track and spot any dangers to national security. so a new censorship tool appears under the name "Public Opinion Measurement System" through which a procurement process for the delivery and management of software for monitoring the Internet was carried out.[74]

In 2017, the United Arab Emirates purchased a crucial component of the repressive regime arsenal - the Cerebro spyware -, and provided it to the Egyptian government for "digital espionage" which can describe as the unauthorized use of computer networks and other resources to gain access to or send sensitive information is known as cyber espionage. the Internet surveillance program Cerebro. Cerebro uses Deep Packet Inspection technology to do thorough monitoring of communications, including phone conversations, SMS, emails, and messages. These procedures are based on a broad doctrine that the Egyptian government adopted, according to which monitoring may be used to safeguard national security without

[73] Marquis-Boire, M. (2017a, July 10). Planet Blue Coat: Mapping Global Censorship and Surveillance Tools. The Citizen Lab. https://citizenlab.ca/2013/01/planet-blue-coat-mapping-global-censorship-and-surveillance-tools/

[74] Is the government watching Egyptians or watching over them: Egypt's Cyber Crime law in January - Politics - Egypt. (n.d.). Ahram Online. https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/253973.aspx

being constrained by human rights or the rule of law. International ties with Egypt are impacted by this strategy.[75]

On May 24, 2017, Internet users were surprised to find 21 websites blocked, including Al-Jazeera, Rassd, the Qatari Al-Arab daily, Cairo Portal, and Mada Masr. However, it is not revealed who made the decision to block. After blocking news sites in Cairo, Egyptian police raided the headquarters of the Al Borsa news website and the English-language news website Daily News Egypt, confiscating computer equipment and interviewing employees. confiscating electronic equipment and questioning personnel about their political coverage. At the same time, there are some attempts to legitimize website blocking in Egypt, such as Al-Masri al-Youm newspaper's publication of a study sourced from a sovereign governmental entity that reviews other nations' experiences with website blocking. And other attempts to publish that those 21 websites deliberately spread misinformation in support of terrorism and extremism.[76]

Additionally, the encrypted texting app was blocked in Egypt. Indeed, The end-to-end encryption used by this program, which is accessible on iOS, Android, and desktop, prevents other parties from viewing the material being transferred. Egyptian activists and journalists frequently use it to safeguard their sources. Open Whisper Systems (OWS), which makes the top encrypted mobile communication tools used by Internet freedom advocates worldwide, provided an update on the app's status. RedPhone, Signal, and TextSecure are some of these tools. WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and Skype are just a few of the popular messaging services that have used the Signal encryption protocol as their foundation. The authorities continue to block news websites, and VoIP services for users of messaging applications including Apple FaceTime, Viber, Skype, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp have been interrupted by Egypt. People cannot use VoIP services because of rules. According to Open Whisper Systems, the firm that created the encrypted communications software Signal, Egypt has started limiting access to it. The action demonstrates how governments may still attempt

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[75] How Cairo spies on regime critics online | D+C - Development + Cooperation. (n.d.). https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/egyptian-regime-uses-spyware-against-critics-some-it-bought-european-companies

[76] Egypt Extends 25-Year-Old Emergency Law. (2006, April 30). https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/30/AR2006043001039.html

to restrict the use of technology like Signal when privacy-conscious consumers transition to them.[77]

The Court of Administrative Justice's decision to block YouTube for one month was upheld by Egypt's Supreme Administrative Court on February 3, 2013, under Case No. 1675/66 Judiciary. The punishment was imposed as a result of certain online users publishing The Innocence of Muslims or excerpts that do not respect Islam. Google, YouTube's parent firm, denied demands to remove the film from the platform but blocked access to it in several countries, including Egypt claiming that the video violated local laws. Although Egyptian laws have not specified the circumstances under which websites may be banned, the court ruled that the government has the power to do so if doing so compromises national security or upholds public order. According to the court, YouTube's hosting of the aforementioned movie has a harmful impact on national security, hence the site should be blocked.[78]

In 2020, The Egyptian government has taken extensive steps to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus[79] in the wake of an increasing number of infections. However, efforts to support the telecommunications industry and provide direct services to users have been restricted to encouraging remote work and electronic transactions while also freeing up 20% of the monthly download capacity for home Internet subscriptions. Despite the difficulties brought on by the new coronavirus, which necessitates respect for people's freedom to access information and makes digital media more accessible than ever before, and the rising number of sick people and fatalities. Authorities place severe limitations on people's freedom to communicate and utilize the Internet like shutting down Telegram on three Egyptian Internet service networks. These networks included "Orange," "We," and "Vodafone.[80]"

[77] Cox, J. (2016b, December 19). Signal Claims Egypt Is Blocking Access to Encrypted Messaging App. https://www.vice.com/en/article/nz755w/signal-claims-egypt-is-blocking-access-to-encrypted-messaging-app

[78] Hossam, A. (2020b, November 1). Egypt's Supreme Administrative Court Blocks YouTube. Legal Agenda. https://english.legal-agenda.com/egypts-supreme-administrative-court-blocks-youtube/

[79] A, A. (2022, March 30). Masaar joins 100+ organisations in telling governments: don't use the coronavirus pandemic as cover for expanding digital surveillance. Masaar. https://masaar.net/en/masaar-joins-100-organisations-in-telling-governments-dont-use-the-coronavirus-pandemic-as-cover-for-expanding-digital-surveillance/

Farid, C., & Farid, F. Y. (2022, July 20). Egypt is blocking voice calls made over social media apps. Quartz. https://qz.com/africa/967857/egypt-is-blocking-calls-on-whatsapp-facetime-viber-and-skype

[80] A. (2021, September 9). Internet censorship events in Egypt [timeline]. Masaar. https://masaar.net/en/internet-censorship-events-in-egypt-timeline/

The primary reason is apparently security concerns, but there is also suspicion that local telecoms have complained to authorities about free calls via such applications. the categories of websites that reported the most network deviations and are thus assumed to have been blocked most frequently. It appears that several websites have been restricted like human rights websites and some political websites. There are websites advocating for human rights (like Human Rights Watch, Reporters Without Borders, the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, and the Journalists Observatory against Torture) as well as sites critical of politics (like the April 6 Youth Movement),[81] raising the question of whether censorship decisions were influenced by political considerations. Despite merely ordering the suspension of 21 news websites, it appears that more than 100 URLs that belong to media organizations have been blacklisted. These include worldwide media websites as well as Egyptian news sources (such as Mada Masr, Almesryoon, Masr Al Arabia, and Daily News Egypt) (such as Al Jazeera and Huffington Post Arabic).[82]

Egypt's history of Internet censorship is a complicated and diverse topic. The Internet has changed from being open in the early days of the Internet to becoming more restrictive and authoritarian. In Egypt, the government has employed Internet censorship as a means of quashing dissent and regulating the flow of information online. The government has used a variety of strategies to censor online information, including limiting access to websites, keeping an eye on online conversations, and detaining and arresting people for their online behavior. After outlawing protests and gradually seizing control of traditional media, the Egyptian government has launched a multifaceted campaign to completely censor and restrict digital spaces. This campaign includes website blocking, arrests based on social media posts, attempts to hack activists' computers, and the legalization of these actions through a plethora of new draconian laws. While Egypt's administration has boasted of intentions to make the nation a digital center for Africa and the Middle East, the state's predilection for digital censorship contradicts such aspirations, to say nothing of the fundamental liberties the state denies. The constant censoring of opposition websites demonstrates the extent to which even

[81] April 6 Youth Movement. (2017, February 19). EgyptToday.
https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/6/3340/April-6-Youth-Movement

[82] Michaelson, R. (2017, May 25). Egypt blocks access to news websites including Al-Jazeera and Mada Masr. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/25/egypt-blocks-access-news-websites-al-jazeera-mada-masr-press-freedom

a little effort is viewed as a serious danger, indicating that the current dictatorship is both profoundly insecure and internally confused.

2.2 Constitutional rights

The complex and dynamic constitutional framework of Egypt aims to uphold people's rights and advance democratic governance. Following a time of political turbulence and societal unrest. The constitution includes several clauses aimed at defending personal freedoms and rights, such as freedom of speech, association, and assembly. The effective application of these rights in Egypt faces major obstacles despite these constitutional guarantees. In reality, the government has frequently employed legal and administrative means to suppress online rights, including freedom of expression.

Following the parliamentary adoption of a comprehensive package of constitutional modifications that weaken the independence of the judicial and legislative branches in favor of the executive branch and the military, Egyptians cast ballots on the changes in a countrywide referendum. In April 2011, the National Elections Authority (NEA) reported that, with a 44 percent turnout, 88.8 percent of voters supported the modifications, while 11.1 percent rejected them. The amendments, which have a significant impact on Egypt's political future, were hurriedly brought to a national referendum, during which Egyptians lacked adequate time to consider the vote's implications, and movements and people who opposed the amendments were denied the right to vote, and the government used coercive and unlawful tactics.[83]

Following President Hosni Mubarak's ouster on February 11, 2011, there were widespread calls to amend the 1971 Constitution, which many saw as laying the groundwork for the country's authoritarian dictatorship. During this time, Egypt experienced three constitutional referenda and two constitutions. Following the events of January 2011, the subject of whether the constitution should be modified or a new constitution constructed became a prominent source of debate. On February 13, 2011, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF),

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[83] TIMEP Brief: Egypt's 2019 Constitutional Referendum. (2019, April 30). The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. https://timep.org/2019/04/30/egypts-2019-constitutional-referendum/

which gained control in February 2011, issued a constitutional declaration suspending the 1971 Constitution.[84]

In 2012, Egypt's new constitution, which President Mohamed Morsi signed into law, has been criticized by his divided opposition as a betrayal of the initial democratic aspirations of the 2011 uprising against the Hosni Mubarak administration. The objectives of Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood, which aspires to impose its Islamic ideology on moderate Muslims, secularists, and non-Muslim minorities, are leaned towards in the new constitution.[85]

Egypt's president since 2014, a year after Abdul Fattah al-Sisi overthrew Islamist President Mohamed Morsi with the help of the military after widespread protests against his government. President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi signed a proclamation on August 15, 2015, ratifying bill number 94 for the year 2015: the anti-terrorism law. If dealing with a terrorist crime, this law allows the public prosecutor (or the investigating authority) to order (in a reasoned decree) censoring and recording communications and calls and recording. The prosecution also has the authority to restrict websites that disseminate deceptive content with the intent of defrauding the court system. Issuing the Anti-Terrorism Law No. 94 of 2015.[86] The terms terrorist organizations and terrorist activities are defined in this Law, which has 54 articles. It increases the penalties that natural and legal individuals may face if convicted of advocating, funding, or assisting terrorism.

Egypt's new constitution, which became law in January 2014, does not mark a new democratic turning point, despite cautious liberalization in a few select sectors. The adoption process was not inclusive, and the wording is based on constitutional traditions dating back to 1971, which have helped to pave the way for authoritarian leadership in some ways. Egypt held a referendum to approve a new constitution that declared the right to privacy and the freedom of speech in which the state should preserve citizens' rights to utilize all types of public means of communication, which may not be arbitrarily interrupted, stopped, or withheld from individuals by the law. Human rights provisions are featured in Chapter II

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[84] EISA Egypt: 2011 Constitutional referendum. (n.d.).
https://www.eisa.org/wep/egy2011referendum.htm

[85] Phillips, J. (n.d.). Egypt: Morsi Regime Rams Through New Egyptian Constitution | The Heritage Foundation. The Heritage Foundation. https://www.heritage.org/middle-east/commentary/egypt-morsi-regime-rams-through-new-egyptian-constitution

[86] Alzubairi, F. (2019). Egyptian Anti-Terrorism Law No. 94 of 2015. Colonialism, Neo-Colonialism, and Anti-Terrorism Law in the Arab World, 225–236. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108569262.010

(Basic Components of Society), and Chapter III (Public Rights, Freedoms, and Responsibilities) of the constitution.[87]

An exception may be made in the case of national emergency or time of war, allowing limited censorship of newspapers, publications, and media on matters related to general safety or the purposes of national security, all according to the law and article 57 "states" "Private life is inviolable, safeguarded, and may not be infringed upon. telegraph, e-correspondence, telephone calls, and any other means of communication are inviolable and their confidentiality is guaranteed, examined, or monitored by causal judicial order, for a limited period, and in cases specified by the law".

The laws controlling the media in Egypt are extremely convoluted, with overlapping regulations laid forth in many pieces of legislation. Egypt has also signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and is required to abide by its interpretation as determined by the Human Rights Committee, the only authorized entity. Moreover, the Media Regulation Law strengthens the authority to regulate people's personal social media profiles, provided that the account has at least 5,000 followers. These accounts may be blocked by the Supreme Media Regulatory Council if it determines that they propagate or broadcast false information, encourage criminal activity, instigate violence or hatred, discriminate against other users, or promote racism or intolerance.[88]

According to Article 93 of the Constitution,"The state is committed to the agreements, covenants, and international conventions of human rights that were ratified by Egypt. They have the force of law after publication in accordance with the specified circumstances."It has signed many accords having privacy concerns, including The Universal Declaration of Human Rights; The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; African Charter on Human and People's Rights; The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam. Simply human rights accords that have been ratified are now considered Egyptian domestic law.[89]

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[87] Serodio, D. (2017). 4 Shaping Egypt's 2014 Constitution: Controversy and Negotiations. Serodio. https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869332-51

[88] Abdelmonsef, A. (2018, July 16). Egypt's position on human rights conventions. Egyptian Institute for Studies. https://en.eipss-eg.org/egypts-position-on-human-rights-conventions/

[89] Human Rights Treaties in Egypt: as Good as the Government that Upholds Them. (2014, January 24). https://timep.org/2014/01/24/human-rights-treaties-in-egypt-as-good-as-the-government-that-upholds-them/

This constitutional clause incorporates international treaties into Egyptian domestic law without the need for enabling legislation, demonstrating legal monism. Under the legal system, the judiciary can interpret and apply international law in the same way as it would domestic law.

According to Article 91 of the law, the council is empowered to take the necessary action in the event of a violation. According to that, it is permitted to stop or block the website, blog, or account if any of them publishes or broadcasts false news, or what advocates or incites to break the law, to violence, or hatred or that involves discrimination between citizens, or calls for racism, intolerance, or includes breach of individual honor, or insults or defamations them; The rules connected to banning websites and private accounts on social media have also been approved by the executive regulations of the Law Regulating Media and Press and the punishments imposed by the Supreme Council of Media and Press Regulation.

When there is proof that a website inside or outside the country has posted any texts, numbers, photographs, videos, or other propaganda material that poses a threat to national security or jeopardizes the security of the nation or its national economy, the ability to ban such a website should exist.

Article 47 "define "The Public Prosecution or the competent investigating authority, according to the case, in a terrorist crime, may authorize a reasoned order for a period not exceeding thirty days, to monitor and record conversations and messages received on wireless, wireless and other modern means of communication, and to record and photograph what is happening in private places".

This article gives non-legislative, or judicial authorities the authority to decide on new types of data that are regarded to be unknown, unidentified, and unregulated by forcing service providers to maintain and preserve them.

Egyptian constitutional guarantees of free expression Articles 12 and 13 of the Declaration of the Constitution guarantee media freedom and free speech by providing the following protections: Freedom of opinion is also guaranteed, and every person has the right to express his opinion and publish it in spoken, written, photographed, or other forms within the confines of the law. Therefore, the Egyptian Constitution was enacted into law to defend human rights and the free The legislation designed to protect the right to privacy was separated from reality because it failed to consider the urgent need to review numerous laws,

court rulings, and other administrative decisions that make up a significant portion of Egypt's legislative structure and obstruct the exercise of this right and reduce the effectiveness of the constitutional protections that are guaranteed to it. Therefore, the Egyptian Constitution was enacted into law to defend human rights and the freedom of speech, but in reality, it did the opposite by increasing governments' and businesses' abilities to threaten citizens' privacy, whether through the use of mass surveillance technologies and the ability to intercept and collect data or through inspection procedures and other practices, this conflict between these new laws and the entire legislative structure arises. in detail, the user's right to information is seriously violated.

Also, Article (13) "Whoever unlawfully benefits, through the information system network or any information technology means, with a telecommunications service or audio broadcasting channel services, shall be punished with imprisonment for no less than three months and a fine of no less than ten thousand pounds and no more than fifty thousand pounds, or either of these two penalties. and visible." And also Article 14 defines the punishment for anyone who intentionally or unintentionally gains access to a website, private account, or information system that is prohibited without proper authorization. Such an individual shall be subject to imprisonment for at least one year and a fine ranging from 50,000 to 100,000 pounds, or either of the two penalties. Article 15 declares that anyone who uses authorized access to a website, private account, or information system but exceeds the limits of this access in terms of time shall face imprisonment for at least six months and a fine ranging from 30,000 to 50,000 pounds, or either of the two penalties.

Article 17 states that "whoever deliberately and unlawfully destroys, disrupts, modifies, or cancels, in whole or in part, intentionally and unlawfully stored programmes, data, or information shall be punished with imprisonment for not less than two years and a fine of not less than one hundred thousand pounds and not exceeding five hundred thousand pounds, or either of these penalties." Processing, generating, or creating on any information system or the equivalent, regardless of the means employed in the crime. The offence of assault on e-mail or websites or private accounts is defined in article (18) as "whoever destroys, interrupts, slows down, or hacks an e-mail, website, or account of individuals must be penalised by imprisonment for not less than one month and a fine of not less than $50,000."

The crime of attacking the integrity of the information network in article (21)"Whoever intentionally causes an information network to stop working, disable it, reduce its efficiency,

interfere with it, impede it, or intercept its work or unlawfully perform electronic processing of its data". Whoever causes this by his fault shall be punished by imprisonment for no less than three months, and a fine of no less than fifty thousand pounds and no more than two hundred thousand pounds, or one of the two penalties. If the crime occurs on an information network belonging to the state or a public legal person, owned or managed by it, the penalty shall be temporary hard labor and a fine of not less than five hundred thousand pounds and not exceeding one million pounds.

Software, hardware, and equipment used in committing information technology crimes which defined in Article (22)"Whoever possesses acquires, imports, sells, makes available, manufactures, produces, imports, exports or trades in any form shall be punished with imprisonment for a period of no less than two years, and a fine of no less than three hundred thousand pounds and not exceeding five hundred thousand pounds, or either of these two penalties. Trading, any devices, equipment, tools, programs designed, developed, modified, passcodes, codes, codes, or any similar data, without permission from the device or justified by reality or law, and it was proven that such behavior was for the purpose of using any of them to commit any crime". the investigation authorities and law enforcement agencies to stifle free speech on different entertainment platforms and impose restrictions on Internet access.

Then Crimes related to assaulting the sanctity of private life which define in Article (25) "Whoever assaults any of the family principles or values in Egyptian society, violates the sanctity of private life, or sends numerous from electronic messages to a specific person without his consent, or giving personal data to a system or website to promote goods or services without his consent, or publishing through the information network or any information technology means information, news, pictures, and the like, that violates the privacy of any person without his consent whether the published information is correct or incorrect." For example, Since April 2020, the police have detained about nine girls and charged them with crimes. They received jail sentences and hefty penalties for posting amusement-related information on several social networking sites. The documents these women and girls released, according to the authorities, "violate the norms and values of the Egyptian family." [90]

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[90] Egypt: Spate of 'Morality' Prosecutions of Women. (2023, February 2). Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/17/egypt-spate-morality-prosecutions-women

Generally, there is no clear definition in the constitution of how far human rights can be constrained. Several constitutional rights were previously weakened by clawback clauses ('to be governed by law,' which opened the door to repressive legislation and administrative practice. The new constitution does little to avoid such a recurrence. Most articles on legal implementation do not include state-specific reasons for limits. The government's activities in Egypt breached constitutional rights, including those related to the Internet, and went against the fundamentals of human rights. The Egyptian government has a history of blocking websites, intercepting Internet traffic, and monitoring online communications without a court order, all of which violate Internet rights. In times of political instability, the government has also completely shut down the Internet, which restricts people's freedom of expression online. These activities infringe on the rights to information access, privacy, and freedom of expression, all of which are protected by international human rights standards.

Despite constitutional protections for press freedom and freedom of expression, Egyptian journalists and media outlets have experienced intimidation, arrest, and incarceration for covering delicate subjects including political dissent, human rights violations, and government corruption. International human rights norms are also violated by this infringement on press and expression freedom. Overall, even though the Egyptian Constitution guarantees some rights and protections, these rights and protections have occasionally been abused, and the government's actions have run counter to both online rights and basic human rights. It is imperative that the government act to resolve these challenges.

2.3 Telecommunications Law and Regulation

Egypt's Internet users are subject to several regulations, some of which were passed more than ten years ago and others in more recent times. Domestic legislation in Egypt allows for or restricts legal monitoring, These rules have swiftly developed into a means of restricting access to the Internet and depriving its users of their right to privacy and freedom of speech. Eventually, Internet and phone services were suspended, which made it very evident that the state was able to control the Internet, and telecommunications like banning websites has become a common practice. the NTA's responsibilities as a regulator of all matters relating to telecommunications and the Internet, issuing licenses to telecom businesses, and keeping an eye on their operations.

Digital information, including pictures of demonstrators, was removed from the Internet in the days immediately following the 25 January 2011 revolution. As a result, telecommunications and Internet services were later suspended, demonstrating the state's power to regulate telecommunications and the Internet by Article 67 of the Telecommunication Regulation Law, which gives national security authorities the ability to dominate telecom companies.The communications sector is governed by the Communications Law (Law 10 of 2003), which also governs law enforcement agencies' access to communications and communication infrastructure.[91]

In general terms, it is against the law to intercept or record private conversations without a court order, but the Communications Law gives the military and security services considerable authority to gather information for undefined national security reasons which clarified the Egypt Telecommunication Regulation Law No. 10 of 2003, Article 64 "Restrictions and Duties Telecommunication Services Operators, Providers, their employees and Users of such services shall not use any Telecommunication Services encryption equipment except after obtaining written consent from each of the NTRA, the Armed Forces and National Security Entities, and this shall not apply to encryption equipment of radio and television broadcasting".

According to Article 64 of the Telecommunications Law," all network providers must pay for and provide the military forces and security services with access to all of their technological resources for them to perform their legal authority". Therefore, if a telecommunications provider can help in this way technically, the government may ask for their collaboration. However, a telecommunications operator cannot take on the obligations or liabilities of a third party, particularly one whose network or equipment the operator has no access to or control over. In reality, the telecommunications provider's only real option would be to provide the authorities with the relevant third party's contact information. According to Article 64 of the Telecommunication Regulation Law, any operator seeking to encrypt its telecommunication services must first have National Telecom Regulatory Authority (NTRA) approval. The same Article goes into further detail in this regard and states that all network operators are required to make all of their equipment, programmers, and technical capabilities available to the armed forces and security agencies at their expense so that they can exercise

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[91] Law No. 10 of 2003 Regulating Telecommunications • Page 1 • CYRILLA: Global Digital Rights Law. (n.d.). https://cyrilla.org/en/entity/ql4lxs8zsxgyave2tyundygb9

their jurisdiction. Based on our interpretation, this means that an operator must make the decryption tools of any encryption solution it may use available for the armed forces and security agencies' lawful use.

Telecommunication Service providers and operators and their marketing agents shall have the right to collect accurate information and data concerning Users from individuals and various entities within the State.According to Article 67 of the Telecommunications Regulation Law (No. 10 of 2003), all telecommunications companies, including Vodafone, Orange, and We, are directly under the National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority's (NTRA) control during major incidents involving national security, such as natural disasters and environmental catastrophes, or when the government declares a state of general mobilization by the law (No. 87 of 1960). In such cases, the NTRA, in collaboration with the armed forces and the other authorities, has the authority to compel all telecommunications companies to carry out its preventative plan intended to ensure defense and national security. Government officials decide what defines national security. Such power may even allow for the complete network shutdown of a provider. A powerful state authority may utilize this legal authority to seize control of a network.

According to Article 69, personnel assigned by NTRA, the armed forces, and national security organizations may be treated as judicial officers for offenses against the Telecommunications Regulation Law (No. 10 of 2003) that pertain to the duties of their positions, upon resolution by the Minister of Justice in consultation with the relevant minister. Otherwise, the NTA's exercise of its authority is not subject to judicial review.

After considering the case, the Administrative Court rendered its decision in 2013, prohibiting YouTube for one month as well as any connections to the objectionable video about the Prophet. Indeed, The National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA) was ordered to ban YouTube for one month in 2013 as a result of a movie that was deemed disrespectful to the Prophet Mohammed and the Highest Administrative Court backed that lower court decision. "Innocence of Muslims" a 2012 low-budget film, was met with protests and criticism in Egypt and other countries having a majority of Muslims. The order was delayed throughout the appeals process when the NTRA disputed a lower administrative court's decision to ban the video-sharing website the following year. When the decision was first announced, the (ICT)ministry said that it would be challenging to put it into effect

without also affecting Google's web search engine, which may lead to extraordinarily expensive costs.

In 2020 Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi passed the Personal Data Protection Law (Law No. 151 of 2020),[92] with the goal of protecting and regulating the acquisition and processing of personal data of Egyptian citizens and residents. The law defines personal data as "any information relating to any natural person that can be recognized directly or indirectly by reference to an identifier such as a name, voice, a picture, an identification number, an online identifier, or any other data specific to the phycological, health, economic, cultural, or social identity of that person."

The law gave the Public Prosecution or the competent investigation authority the authority to stop or block websites if they were "created for the purpose of promoting ideas or beliefs, or called for terrorist acts or broadcasting" or if they were intended to deceive the security authorities or influence the course of justice in any terrorist crime, or they took over exchanges. By adding the blocking of websites in multiple laws, where the blocking was authorized in regulatory and criminal legislation under various legal interpretations, the authorities were able to legalize the activities that started in 2017. The Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes Law and the Law Regulating Media and the Press are two examples of such laws.

Blocking as a key measure is governed by Cybercrime Law No. 175 of 2018,[93]which was published in August 2018. According to Article (2) of the Law regarding Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes, telecommunications/Internet providers are required to"1- Retain and store the information system data or any other means of information technology for a default period of 180 days. This data includes the following: (A)Personal identifiers (information that identifies the service's user) (B)Metadata (data related to the content of the information system) (C) Data related to communication traffic. (D)Data related to communication peripherals. (E) Any other data specified by the competent authority.For the following reasons, Article (2) of Law No. 175/2018 infringes on citizens' right to privacy.

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[92] Egypt Extends 25-Year-Old Emergency Law. (2006, April 30). https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/30/AR2006043001039.html

[93]الجمل, أ. (n.d.).قانون 75 لسنة 2018بشأن مكافحة جرائمتقنية المعلومات. https://ahmedazimelgamel.blogspot.com/2018/08/175-2018.html

First, service providers are required to keep this data for a long period, and the longer this period is, the more susceptible this data is to interference, piracy, and illegal or commercial use.

According to the legislation, the investigating authorities have the authority to decide to block websites anytime they determine that the information posted on those websites represents a crime, a threat to national security, or jeopardizes the security or stability of the nation. Article No. 6 of the Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes Law No. 175 of 2018 empowers the investigation authorities to issue a substantiated order to the competent judicial officers for a period not exceeding thirty days, renewable once, whenever this is useful in revealing the truth about a crime's commission.Under the new Cybercrime Law, a website or account may be banned.

According to Article 7 "state " any website that contains material that is illegal under the law may be blocked if it threatens national security, jeopardizes the safety of the nation, or harms its economy." Historically, Egyptian law enforcement has targeted anybody who speaks out with monitoring and "pretrial detention," which enables them to imprison you despite the fact that you have not been found guilty of a crime. Here, it seems as though the Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes Law may have increased the scope of the jurisdiction given to the control authorities in charge of carrying out the investigation authority's ruling. The lack of the Code of Criminal Procedure's guarantees serves as clear evidence of this. The law also enables the police the ability to ask for website banning prior to a court decision in cases of urgency and need. The Supreme Council of Media Regulation was granted extensive authority by the Law Regulating Media and Press No. 180 of 2018 to enable it to enforce various types of restrictions on websites and personal pages.[94]

The National Telecom Regulatory Authority (NTRA) has the authority to issue orders to prevent or restrict access to content on the Internet under the Telecommunications Regulatory Law. Especially in times of political instability, this has been used to block access to websites and social media platforms. In addition, the government has been charged with deploying surveillance and censoring techniques to keep an eye on and regulate Internet behavior, which can restrict the right to free expression and privacy. For instance, the Cybercrime Law

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[94] S. (2021b, December 6). Guide to the Press and Media Regulation Law. Masaar.
https://masaar.net/en/guide-to-the-press-and-media-regulation-law/

has come under fire for being extremely ambiguous and broad, opening the door to the prosecution of legal online behavior. There are concerns about how the telecommunications rules and regulations in Egypt may affect online rights and freedoms. The government must strike a balance between the necessity for regulation and respect for human rights, particularly the freedom of expression and the right to privacy. Despite the fact that the Egyptian Constitution guarantees some rights and protections, these rights and protections have occasionally been abused, and the government's actions have run counter to both online rights and basic human rights.

2.4 The role of government in controlling social media

The government uses social media as part of its arsenal of repressive tactics to propagate its propaganda and target competing viewpoints. This is the reason why they haven't simply stopped social media services, in addition to the political and financial costs. In April 2020, it was revealed that Twitter had deleted hundreds of fictitious accounts connected to the Egyptian government that had been active on the social media platform. The authorities have played a key role in deleting activist Facebook sites and harassing their accounts.[95] False accounts are used to malign opponents and cover up government errors since they are illegal under their own cybercrime law which is mentioned in offenses relating to the fabrication of sites and private accounts and emails which is declared in Article (24) "Anyone who creates a fake email, website or private account, and falsely attributed the same to the natural or legal person, shall be punishable by imprisonment for no less than three months and a fine of no less than ten thousand Egyptian Pounds and no more than thirty thousand Egyptian Pounds, or by one of these two penalties. If the perpetrator used the fake email, website, or private account in a matter that defiles the reputation of the person to whom the same is attributed, the perpetrator shall be punishable by imprisonment for no less than one year and a fine of no less than fifty thousand Egyptian Pounds and no more than two hundred thousand Egyptian Pounds, or by one of these two penalties. If the crime is perpetrated against a public legal person, the penalty shall be imprisonment and a fine of no less than one hundred thousand

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[95] Staff, M. (n.d.-b). Twitter deletes thousands of accounts used to spread Saudi and Egyptian propaganda. Middle East Eye. https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/twitter-deletes-thousands-accounts-connected-egypt-saudi-arabia

Egyptian Pounds and no more than three hundred thousand Egyptian Pounds, or by one of these two penalties".[96]

As previously mentioned, most laws have provisions that might allow for extended monitoring while a court order is in place. In this situation, the person's right to legal protection for their private lives is null and invalid without their knowledge. This is expected to take place for legal reasons, the most significant of which is disclosing the truth about the commission of a crime. In general, redress for unfair practices involves a number of procedural complications, the most significant of which is compensation for user privacy violations, which necessitates steps to establish the act that constitutes a violation of privacy, in addition to the requirement of presenting technical proof and expert views, as well as the requirement of a court specialized in these issues, to prove the harm caused by this infringement.

Most texts related to criminalization controls and the imposition of fines are clearer and more detailed than protective texts, the wordings of which have always been unclear or specific, together with the complete absence of means of compensation and redress in the event of damage, which leads victims to violations of the right to privacy to traditional litigation methods, which require long periods. With the increased speed of legislation relating to communication technology, there are issues with the formulation of these laws.

The Egyptian legislative landscape is riddled with inconsistencies, with legislation posing a direct threat to user data. Despite the passage of the Personal Data Protection Act, which has yet to be implemented, these issues have directly impacted the rules relating to the right to privacy, where they are primarily summarized in the absence of a link between legislation that may provide some aspects of protection and other legislation as if these laws were written separately. The controls on the clarity of the texts related to the right to privacy are on top of the determinants necessary to protect the right to privacy, as a result of the lack of clarity and contradiction of the texts, wasting legislative guarantees, especially since the continuation of the legislative process in this manner will be useless, and rather, the text may be applied incorrectly and out of place, eventually turning the controls into a new limitation on the right to privacy.

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[96] Egypt - Law No. 175 of 2018 Regarding Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes. (n.d.). http://ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=108464&p_country=EGY&p_count=499

The Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes Law,[97] as one of the texts primarily dedicated to preserving users' privacy has led to it becoming a limitation on freedom of speech and converting it into an allegation, which involves financial fines and freedom-depriving consequences. Telecommunications infrastructure management and ownership are highly centralized. Furthermore, rules restrict telecom firms' operations by requiring them to react to requests from national security organizations. Because of this legal framework, Egyptian authorities may censor the Internet and track Internet users on a wide scale. Although encryption technologies are crucial for digital security, using them in Egypt might put you in even more legal problems if government enforcement is already after you. Use of encryption to commit one of the offenses mentioned in Article 22 of the Cybercrime Law such as endangering public safety, inciting violence or discrimination, etc., or concealing evidence relating to those crimes, is prohibited and punished with additional jail time. Law enforcement can leverage the lack of a clear definition of these offenses to target a variety of legal activities, such as community organizing or journalistic reporting, and can apply even heavier penalties if they discover encryption tools on their targets' devices. The Egyptian government plays a big part in regulating social media there. Following the Telecommunications Regulatory Law and other relevant regulations, the government is legally permitted to control social media sites and keep an eye on online behavior.

Concerns regarding the government's use of social media, including censorship, surveillance, and legal action against online activists. During times of political instability, the government has been charged with limiting access to social media platforms and regulating online speech through surveillance and censorship. It is crucial to strike a balance between respect for human rights, such as freedom of expression and privacy, and the government's legitimate duty in regulating social media to preserve public safety and order. The government should seek to create clear, accountable rules that support online rights and encourage a thriving, diversified digital environment.

In the next section, I discuss Egypt's authoritarian system, in which political power is concentrated in the hands of a small group or individual, frequently with no accountability or transparency. Several political parties and civil society organizations are outlawed or tightly monitored, limiting political opposition. civil rights including free expression, assembly and

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[97] Egypt - Law No. 175 of 2018 Regarding Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes. (n.d.-b). http://ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=108464&p_country=EGY&p_count=499

association are frequently restricted, resulting in a lack of democratic institutions and processes.

2.5 Authoritarian regime in Egypt

Egypt's autocratic government has a long history of suppressing political dissent and human liberties. This authoritarianism changed over time, with some periods more oppressive than others. Egypt's history is one of authoritarianism and political repression, with the government using a variety of measures to suppress political opposition and limit civil liberties. This has significantly influenced how the government regulates social media and the Internet. The regime has a reputation for restricting press freedom and free expression, and this has extended to the Internet. The government has been tasked with tracking, stifling, and advancing its agenda through Internet communication platforms and social media. For example, Cybercrime Law has been criticised for being overly unclear and broad, allowing for the prosecution of legal online activities. The executive branch can proclaim a state of emergency at any time, with the assistance of the legislative branch and any oversight bodies that have deteriorated into subservient puppets in the hands of the rulers who brought them.

Egypt had the largest declines in Internet freedom in the Arab world as a result of growing digital repression that corresponded with more extensive human rights violations. The number of countries forbidding political, social, or religious content online has reached an all-time high; these countries typically target information sources that are located outside of their boundaries. Internet users now reside in Egypt, where authorities punish people for using their right to free expression online. The spread of myths that undermine legitimate digital expression via the Internet appears to be a double-edged sword, as what has occurred in Egypt from 2011 to the present shows that the Internet has more negative effects than positive under the authoritarian system.Many of the constitutional changes in the region since 2011 should be seen as authoritarian liberalization processes rather than true democratic experiments.[98]

Emergency law is a legal system that is based on urgent constitutional laws to protect national interests, where it is only used in exceptional and temporary situations to deal with

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[98] Szmolka, I. (2015). Exclusionary and Non-Consensual Transitions Versus Inclusive and Consensual Democratizations: The Cases of Egypt and Tunisia. Arab Studies Quarterly. https://doi.org/10.13169/arabstudquar.37.1.0073

emergencies when the proper government tools are insufficient, provided that it ends with the end of its justifications and justifications.[99] Therefore, declaring a state of emergency is intended to give the executive branch of government the ability to deal with exceptional situations that they are unable to deal with under normal legal frameworks. This empowerment is achieved through the passage of a special law by the constitution, which is subject to controls, most notably legislative and judicial oversight. The imposition of a state of emergency is only permitted in free regimes and democratic nations based on real justifications that have been approved by the legislative power and supervisory bodies. The executive authority then submits the decision of the legislative and supervisory authorities, as well as the judiciary if necessary. the situation in Egypt, whether it is in terms of the executive power's dominance, which is under the control of the regime's leader, or the legislative power's silence and total submission to the executive authority. A state of emergency is rare in democratic nations that uphold freedoms and human rights because it is predicated on exceptional events.[100]

Egypt's Emergency Law[101] was implemented in the wake of President Anwar Sadat's murder in 1981 and was repeatedly prolonged until it was repealed in May 2011 during the Arab Spring. Another issue of rule of law importance is how the state of emergency is regulated. Article 154 states that the President announces a state of emergency after conferring with the Cabinet. Within seven days, it should be submitted to the House of Representatives. The declaration must be approved by a majority of members in the House of Representatives. A state of emergency should only be declared for three months and can only be prolonged by parliament with a two-thirds majority of members' approval. The engagement of parliament and the time limit are both positives, but the article lacks detail and is not consistent with international law in other areas. It makes no mention of the repercussions of a state of emergency, i.e. which rights could be restricted in what ways. The constitution does not refer to some rights being inviolable even in times of emergency, as required under the ICCPR. Similarly, the text gives no justification for declaring a state of emergency. These measures

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[99] Shaikhoun, A. (2022, February 14). A legal review of Sisi's decision to abolish emergency law. Egyptian Institute for Studies. https://en.eipss-eg.org/a-legal-review-of-sisis-decision-to-abolish-emergency-law/
[100] Egypt Lifted its State of Emergency: What Now? (2021, November 10). https://timep.org/2021/11/10/egypt-lifted-its-state-of-emergency-what-now/
[101] Egyptian Emergency Laws. (n.d.). Religion and Public Life at Harvard Divinity School. https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/faq/egyptian-emergency-laws-0

are insufficient, especially given that Egypt has been ruled under a state of emergency for decades.[102]

However, emergency laws have been used both before and after 1981 to give the government and police forces broad powers to detain and arrest people who they believe to be "threats" to the government, to restrict freedoms of assembly and the Internet, to put restrictions on their use, to try people in unmonitored military courts, and to monitor and censor publications.[103] Thousands of Egyptians were imprisoned and subjected to torture between 1981 and 2011 as a result of the Emergency Law, which Hosni Mubarak periodically extended in the name of combating terrorism, drug trafficking, and the alleged danger presented by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. However, human rights organizations pointed out that the Emergency Law was applied to muzzle any government critics. Even though Hosni Mubarak promised that the emergency decree would be repealed and replaced with specific anti-terrorism measures. It has consistently been renewed since this time. Although government representatives, including President Hosni Mubarak, had frequently said that they would not seek to prolong the state of emergency past May 31, 2008. The removal of the emergency that Egypt has been under for almost 30 years, as well as an end to abuses committed under the nation's 53-year-old emergency rule, were among the demands of protestors that forced the departure of former president Hosni Mubarak in February 2011.[104]

The use of emergency measures in Egypt during its extended state of emergency to silence political opponents. In light of political and legislative conditions that undercut human rights and fundamental freedoms, Egyptian society is subject to limitations placed on numerous digital spaces. The law concerning the state of the emergency article 3 Whenever the state of emergency is declared the President of the Republic may take by a written or verbal order the following measures" Article 3 (according to the last amendment on 3 June 2013): Once the State of Emergency is declared, the President of the Republic has the right to, put limitations on fundamental freedoms, including freedom of movement, assembly, residence, and traffic in certain places or times. The same article allows for the surveillance of all forms of "correspondence" and expression, including newspapers and other publications before

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[102] Reza, S. (2007). Endless Emergency: The Case of Egypt. New Criminal Law Review, 10(4), 532–553. https://doi.org/10.1525/nclr.2007.10.4.532

[103] Egypt Extends 25-Year-Old Emergency Law. (2006, April 30). https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/30/AR2006043001039.html

[104] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2023, January 18). Egypt Uprising of 2011. Encyclopedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/event/Egypt-Uprising-of-2011

publication, and the power to shut down publication houses and confiscate materials for "public safety or issues of national security".The Emergency Law is one of the legal tools that allow for surveillance during a declared emergency. In Egypt, situations of emergency are regularly invoked and, once declared, are frequently extended.[105]

Egypt declares a state of emergency by Emergency Law 162/1958 if there is a threat to public safety and order on a national or regional scale. Article 3 gives the President or his designate a broad range of censorship, seizure, and closure rights about publications for the sake of public safety and national security. Additionally, the President forms the State Security Courts and names its judges, including military judges, by Article 7 of the emergency statute. As a result, the emergency law violates Egypt's responsibilities under the ICCPR's provisions, particularly Article 9's restriction on arbitrary detention that "Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No person shall be arbitrarily detained or arrested".[106]

Since April 2017, the country has been subject to a proclaimed emergency that is periodically renewed. The right to access government information and data is also guaranteed by the constitution, but this right is not enforced by law, and neither is the relationship between citizens and government institutions governed by the law nor is a proactive publication of all necessary information mandated by the constitution. Despite the Supreme Council for Media Regulation's proposal for legislation governing the dissemination of information being finished since the end of 2017, it remains hidden in the cabinet's drawers. This is in addition to the administrative and financial barriers put in place by the government to prevent the creation and ownership of digital media, as well as the ongoing development of legislative frameworks that could result in penalties for social media users and the prosecution of Internet users for disseminating false information.

The repressive emergency law gives the government broad authority, including the ability to censor media and monitor people's communications without a court's intervention. The aim of the various legislations and laws that sought to safeguard citizens from any intrusion into their private lives has been to protect their right to personal space, which is defined by the boundaries of each person's home and specifically includes his or her personal

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[105] What does ending the state of emergency in Egypt mean? - Courts & Law - Egypt. (n.d.). Ahram Online. https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/1233/436649/Egypt/Courts--Law/What-does-ending-the-state-of-emergency-in-Egypt-m.aspx
[106] Egypt - Emergency Law No. 162/1958. (n.d.). https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_isn=111245

communication with others. A higher danger of such data and communication being violated by external parties, including state officials, always goes along with this evolution. Given the significant advancement of electronic methods of communication, particularly the Internet and its numerous applications, which are now available on devices other than personal computers and smartphones, such as smartphones, which enable us to save or store the majority of our data electronically and exchange it constantly with various people and locations using network connectivity, it has become essential to protect our privacy to preserve this volume of data and communications that could be used against us in some way.[107]

The battle against "all sorts and manifestations of terrorism" was subsequently proclaimed a national goal in the January 2014 Constitution, which also gave the security agencies extensive power. Since then, the dictatorship has expanded the definition of terrorism by decree numerous times to encompass a fresh assortment of crimes. As a result, not only the Muslim Brotherhood but also anyone who disagrees with the government's account of controversial events in Egypt may now be targeted for prosecution by special courts for crimes related to terrorism under the pretext that they pose a threat to the public order or the nation's unity. ".The Anti-Terrorism Law (Law No. 94 of 2015), Anti-Terrorism Law declare" (A)Terrorist group: Any group, association, body, organization, or gang consisting of at least three people, or any entity for which such status is proven, irrespective of its legal form, whether inside or outside the country and regardless of its nationality or the nationality of its members, that aims to commit one or more terrorist crimes or for which terrorism is one of the means used to achieve or implement its criminal purposes". The most recent legislation, which went into effect in the middle of August 2015, expanded the list of offenses that can be tried as terrorist crimes to include even private displays of support for organizations that have been flagged by the legal system as terrorist entities. Rights organizations have criticized the new law and cited it as evidence that it is an attempt to criminalize "thought crime".[108]

[107] Lavie, L., & Yefet, B. (2022). The Relationship between the State and the New Media in Egypt: A Dynamic of Openness, Adaptation, and Narrowing. Contemporary Review of the Middle East, 9(2), 138–157.
[108] Grimm, J. (2015). Repressing Egypt's Civil Society: State Violence, Restriction of the Public Sphere, and Extrajudicial Persecution.

The government has developed its legal strategies, starting with the arbitrary interpretation of laws governing communications, moving on to conservative judicial interpretations of legal concepts like national security, imposing censorship through exceptional legislation like the Anti-Terrorism Law, and concluding with the legalization of permanently blocking websites in regular laws, either as part of the investigation process in cases related to what has come to be known as cybercrime, The evolution of blocking methods, which range from relying on IP address blocking, IP packet blocking, or blocking based on deep packet inspection, to the use of sophisticated methods like Sandvine equipment, has occurred concurrently with the development of the legal framework to permit the blocking of websites. Egypt's authoritarian leadership has significantly influenced the direction of the country's social policies. Internet and social media regulation. While the government has a right to regulate social media in order to safeguard public safety and order, it is crucial to strike a balance between this and respect for human rights, such as freedom of expression and privacy. The government should seek to create clear, accountable rules that support online rights and encourage a thriving, diversified digital environment.

2.6 Online activists' cases from 2011 until 2023

The Arab Spring focused on how a lot of individuals utilized social media to demand leadership change in numerous Middle Eastern nations. The Egyptian Revolution started in the digital blogosphere. Through activism, news production, and online contact, virtual media transformed periods of political conflict. The Egyptian government has exercised its authority to stifle dissent and opposing opinions expressed online and through social media is the imprisonment of Internet activists. The Egyptian government has targeted a number of people who have expressed disapproval of the government and its policies online. Journalists, bloggers, social media influencers, and advocates for human rights are some of these people. Many of these people have been taken into custody and charged with crimes with wide or ambiguous definitions, such as distributing false information or endangering national security. Some have further endured physical abuse, torture, or protracted imprisonment in isolation. Online dialogue and freedom of expression have been stifled as a result of the arrest of Internet activists. The government's use of force to stifle dissent and critical opinions expressed online and through social media is well shown by Egypt's arrest of Internet activists. Since they worry about retaliation or being detained by the authorities, many people are increasingly afraid to publicly share their opinions on social media. This has contributed

to a broader culture of censorship and self-censorship in Egypt, which restricts citizens' access to free and open discourse on significant social and political topics. Individual activists or journalists are not the only ones affected by these laws; the entire society is affected. Political discussion on the Internet suffers when people are reluctant to speak up and participate. The general level of public discourse deteriorates. In the long run, this can make government institutions less legitimate and make it harder for people to hold their leaders accountable.[109]

Online activists were instrumental in planning and organizing demonstrations against the autocratic rule of former President Hosni Mubarak during the Arab Spring in Egypt. Facebook and Twitter were used to communicate information, plan protests, and compile evidence of government violations of human rights. President Mubarak, in collaboration with the Egyptian government, shut down all social media connections across the country in the days leading up to the march on Tahrir Square. Indeed, Hosni Mubarak's regime was overthrown during Egypt's Arab Spring by extraordinary popular mobilization and protests, the Egyptian government cut down the country's mobile and Internet networks in an unprecedented effort to stifle its citizens' voices. There was a brief window of optimism following Mubarak's ouster regarding increased freedom of speech and political reform in Egypt.

The crackdown, which set a precedent for its breadth and extent, was a response to the public's broad and enthusiastic adoption of social media and digital technology for information sharing, support mobilization, and the planning of on-the-ground demonstrations against the government. Twitter also acted as a platform for movement on behalf of the parties participating in the Arab Spring 2011 uprisings, called "The Twitter Revolution," showing that social media platforms are a tool for freedom and democracy in Egypt. The overthrow of former Egyptian President Mubarak was only the start of a downhill trend into Internet censorship that became ever more oppressive.

Authoritarian governments in the region have incited fear, silenced independent media, orchestrated disinformation and smear campaigns, and harassed and detained journalists, activists, and citizens over their social media content and online activities under the pretext of

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[109] Hibrawi, R. (2019b). Egypt leads the pack in internet censorship across the Middle East. In Atlantic Council. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/egypt-leads-the-pack-in-internet-censorship-across-the-middle-east/

"fighting terrorism" and preserving "national security. The process through which a group gains collective control over the resources required for group action is known as mobilization. An example of how resource mobilization works and how it has changed the landscape of collective action is the way the Egyptian activists used social media as a group to push for peace. Yet, the military coup that overthrew the government repressed dissent, including Internet activism.[110]

Since then, blogger and TikTok users' detentions have increased under authoritarian regimes. Online activists and journalists have seen new crackdowns under the authoritarian government currently in place under the leadership of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. As I previously stated, the government has detained, arrested, and imprisoned several people for expressing unfavorable opinions of the government on the Internet and social media.The use of surveillance tools by the government to keep an eye on online behavior, including that of social media sites, messaging services, and Internet service providers, has expanded recently. As a result, it has become more challenging for online activists to voice their opinions and coordinate opposition to the administration. Online activists in Egypt continue to face difficult circumstances, with many fearing arrest, incarceration, and imprisonment for expressing their opinions online. Nonetheless, their ongoing efforts to advance democratic reform and freedom of speech serve as a reminder of how social media and the Internet may help bring about social and political change despite government suppression.[111]

In Egypt, The Internet can be used to destroy democracies just as easily as it can disrupt dictatorships; it is like an authoritarian tool for censoring people. It is like a mirror that reflects the real world, including legal ones, that is intended to enable free expression and access to information while protecting against misuse of these rights and criminal activity. The issue of freedom of expression and access to information on the Internet is particularly serious in Egypt. The Internet infrastructure in Egypt is actively owned by the government, and it is not a secret that Egypt State has the highest rate of online censorship. From 2011 until the present, Internet freedom and Internet user rights have gotten worse. Though the quality and speed of Internet connections continue to be poor, the Egyptian government has

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[110] Arthur, C. (2017b). Egypt cuts off internet access. In the Guardian.
https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2011/jan/28/egypt-cuts-off-internet-access
[111] Johnson, B. (2017). Censorship: Record number of bloggers arrested. In the Guardian.
https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2008/jun/16/censorship.internet

undertaken attempts to upgrade the ICT infrastructure and increase the number of online users.[112]

The project for the digital transformation of the Egyptian government and its institutions was launched by President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in order to create a competitive, long-lasting knowledge society and a robust digital economy. Internet penetration was 57.3 percent in September 2020, according to the Information and Communication Technology Indicators Bulletin. In response to a concerted effort by the authorities targeting female social media influencers, some TikTok users were given prison terms. censorship still has a detrimental effect on free expression. The alarming situation of Egypt's human rights has only become worse under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. There have been more instances of mass arrests, severe violence against protestors, and due process abuses in recent years. Electronic monitoring is allowed by several Egyptian security organizations, usually with little court supervision. In certain cases, civil society activists have been arrested and imprisoned as a result of unlawfully gathering personal information on them.[113]

According to a study from Egypt's National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority published in April 2020, the use of Internet applications such as the TikTok app hugely increased during the coronavirus shutdown. Indeed, TikTok is a popular app among mobile phone users, and usage of this app has surged by 194% since the shutdown began. The targeting of female influencers has reignited a contentious discussion in Egypt about societal values and individual liberties. Since the current government's election victory, several progressively harsher pieces of legislation have been approved, with this being the most recent through regulations that allow them to block websites considered threats to national security and keep an eye on personal social media accounts with more than 5,000 followers, Egypt has implemented strict Internet controls during the past several years. The Egyptian government has been used to police Internet platforms and frequently dangerous environments.[114]

[112] Freedom House. (n.d.-b). Egypt. https://freedomhouse.org/country/egypt/freedom-net/2020
[113] MCI. (n.d.). ICT Indicators Bulletin.
[114] Zoghaib, S. Z. (2022, August 29). Usage of TikTok and Anxiety among Egyptian Teenagers and Youth during Covid19 Pandemic. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363055936_Usage_of_TikTok_and_Anxiety_among_Egyptian_Teenagers_and_Youth_during_Covid19_Pandemic/citations

Several Egyptians have been imprisoned for comments they made on Facebook and Twitter that were seen as critical of the government. Additionally, it makes hacking into information systems illegal and outlaws the Internet distribution of news about the army and police activity. By Article 7 of the law, the investigating authorities have the authority to prohibit any website they determine to be promoting extremist ideologies that compromise national security or harm the Egyptian economy. Two TikTok activists were sentenced to prison by an Egyptian court, and this decision triggered debate over the place of the electronic application in Egypt, as well as calls from the parliament to control its content. Following the arrests of a well-known social media influencer on suspicion of debauchery and encouraging immorality, the Egyptian government has demanded tighter regulation of women using video-sharing apps. The cybercrime legislation permits online monitoring, website banning, and tracking of Internet users and communications service usage in Egypt.[115]

A harmful confluence of cybercrime and media regulatory legislation hinders freedom of expression and association, stifles the creation and trade of independent media, and further limits online public space. Police monitoring, arrest, detention, and even torture or murder are very real threats. At least three applications were involved in the claims made by the Egyptian Public Prosecution in what local media referred to as "TikTok cases" including Instagram, which is owned by the American corporation Facebook and is used by the Public Prosecution to communicate with the public. Both TikTok and Likee, are owned by the Chinese firm ByteDance and BIGO Technology Ltd, respectively. One of the most popular platforms in Egypt is TikTok. In 2019, there were 7.2 million users in the nation. The application administration made several attempts to accommodate its popularity. For instance, TikTok was announced as one of the 40th edition's official sponsors of the Cairo International Film Festival.[116]

The Public Prosecution charged the material makers with crimes against Egyptian family values and for using TikTok and Likee as a platform for people trafficking. According to TikTok, its policies respect "the cultures and traditions of each society independently." It sent four regional teams with Egyptian and Arab personnel to examine all posted materials. When

[115] Massimino, E., & Hicks, N. (2020, August 31). It's official: In Egypt, you can now get 15 years in jail for a tweet. Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/08/31/its-official-egypt-you-can-now-get-15-years-jail-tweet/

[116] 2021, May 28). The role of app owners -مؤسسة حرية الفكر والتعبير. https://afteegypt.org/en/the-role-of-companies

a video is posted, the platform uses artificial intelligence to check that it does not violate "social customs and values." If it is determined that it does, the video is immediately removed, and the owner is informed that their account will be blocked if they violate the general rules again. The TikTok owner firm is allowed to operate in Egypt, where a formal partnership between the Egyptian government and the owner company has developed thanks to the platform's large user base of millions of citizens since its introduction in 2016. Although TikTok personnel have confirmed that the accused users did not break the publication restrictions, they are still being punished under the excuse of violating family values. Anyone who engages in activities that many people across the world can take for granted, such as participating in open democratic speech and procedures, has been targeted, including investigative journalists, LGBTQ individuals, and TikTok stars. Two female TikTok activists were given prison sentences by an Egyptian court in response to demands that the content of the video-sharing app be censored. Since the start of a security campaign against female content creators on TikTok and Likee, the situation for bloggers and social media influencers have gotten worse.[117]

The social media influencers Mawada Eladhm, and Haneen Hossam were sentenced to six and ten years in jail, respectively, on allegations of "people trafficking," in addition to 300,000 Egyptian pounds in penalties. The site used to accuse Hossam and Al-Adham of human trafficking was called Likee. The platform is owned by the Singapore-based Chinese business BIGO Technology Ltd. Indeed, Haneen Hossam, a student at Cairo University, was accused of engaging in human trafficking since it was claimed that her social media identities were created to persuade other young ladies to sign up for video-sharing websites and post "inappropriate" material. She received a sentence for "corrupting family values, instigating depravity, and promoting sexual activity among young women.Mawada al-Adham, a student, was also detained on related accusations in July 2020 and given a two-year prison sentence. However, an appeals court overturned the convictions in January 2021, and the two women were freed the following month. The site used to accuse Hossam and Al-Adham of human trafficking was called Likee. Several women have been charged with "inciting debauchery" for questioning Egypt's traditional social norms, and as more young Egyptians are using social media, the conflict has gone online. was detained in April 2020 after asking her female

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[117] BBC News. (2020b, July 27). Egypt TikTok: Female influencers jailed over "indecent" videos. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-53557576

fans to join Likee, a different video-sharing website, where she claimed they could earn money by streaming live videos.[118]

Human and women's rights organizations have denounced the arrest campaign, alleging that officials arbitrarily singled out women from low-income backgrounds by using ambiguous and disputed legislative provisions like "violating family values." The allegations were made by the divisive 2018 cybercrime law, which criminalizes actions that violate Egyptian family values without defining precisely what counts as a breach of those norms. Legal professionals and activists assert that the widely drafted word leads to unfair prosecution and unfairly regulates women's bodies and that the arrests were first sparked by a misunderstanding of the law.

Recently, Three TikTok users were arrested by Egyptian police for posting satirical films that criticized the country's rising food prices. The food crisis in Egypt has become an existential threat to the economy as a result of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. As a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, food and gasoline prices in Egypt have soared, and the country's food security situation now poses an existential danger to its economy. Egypt's food security is in a precarious situation since the agricultural sector is unable to produce enough cereal grains, notably wheat, and oilseeds to satisfy even half of the local market. Cairo was already seeing levels of food inflation in 2021 that had not been witnessed since the Arab Spring uprising that had brought down the administration of former President Hosni Mubarak ten years prior. Although the war has hampered exports, both Russia and Ukraine are significant producers of wheat, vegetable oil, and other essentials for the Middle East and North Africa area. Millions of people have liked the videos that the TikTok users, who seem to be a group of young to middle-aged guys, have placed on the app. Their most popular TikTok had around 11 million views.The trio is shown in this video parodying the Abdel Halim Hafez song Hobak Nar (Your Love is Fire), which is a well-known song. The group changed the song's lyrics to reflect their displeasure with the rise in food prices, giving their parody the moniker "The Prices."They're charged with disseminating false information.[119]

[118] BBC News. (2021, June 22). Egypt detains female TikTok star after a human trafficking conviction. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-57566506
[119] Egypt, A. C. I. (2022, May 7). Egypt arrests TikTokers over satirical videos on high food prices. Al-Monitor: Independent, Trusted Coverage of the Middle East. https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/05/egypt-arrests-tiktokers-over-satirical-videos-high-food-prices

In December 2022, a member of the Egyptian parliament Committee sought a briefing to stop the "Tik Tok" application in Egypt, following the growth of Charlie's problems and the suppression of breath, which resulted in the deaths of students and youth. In Egypt, the Egyptian authorities considered TikTok infringed on principles and values and describe that by explaining that Tiktok targeted in the first place with drugs, and then they became targets from these sites, and these issues resulted in the death of a young student who held his breath in his room and died. Legislation to combat information crimes was passed, and the Supreme Media Council was given the right to prohibit websites if they were exposing the national economy, propagating fake news, or making calls to violate the law.[120]

However, Tik Tok representatives stated that the platform is not only a space for joy and entertainment but also a space for the community, with each member being able to share their unique personal experiences, including those related to an individual's mental health, which is an integral part of Tik Tok's mission to support their community while sharing their experiences and useful resources and being able to learn more about mental health resources on TikTok. These security features include the ability to manage screen time and search interference, as well as content warnings and how the site handles bullying and harassment. Article 188 of the Egyptian Penal Code states that anyone who "malevolently publishes false news, statements or rumors that are likely to disturb public order" should be imprisoned for up to one year in prison and pay a fine of 20,000 Egyptian Pounds. The information also refers to various provisions and sanctions included in the Anti-Terrorism Law of 2015 and the Anti-Cybercrime Law of 2018. About a week ago, the Egyptian police arrested four young men because a video clip posted on TikTok garnered millions of views, although the video did not talk about politics or the economy.

The Egyptian government arrested them based on terrorism law and spread false rumors. These young men were arrested because of a video on Tik Tok in the name of the visit.[121] Therefore, the Egyptian government is still unable to adequately oversee these apps. On two distinct levels, it may be argued, the Egyptian government tries to establish control. The first entails monitoring the content before blocking accounts and penalizing specific users. The second level relates to the financial advantages of using digital technology. The social media

[120] A. (2022, December 10). أولت على قم لجنة الصحة على وقاع ةالطالب ضمي في عة الي اكتوك. مجلة أرقام. https://arqam.news/199520/
[121] Neal, W. (2023, February 4). Egyptian TikTokers arrested for prison-visit parody video. Metro. https://metro.co.uk/2023/02/04/egyptian-tiktokers-arrested-for-prison-visit-parody-video-18223738/

platform has a responsibility to protect user privacy and the freedom of speech online. If companies respect this commitment, it will be harder for the government to control social media programs. On the other hand, several House of Representatives members revealed that they had presented a new proposal to develop legislation requiring everyone to register on Facebook using their national identification number and location of residence.[122] Others urged the Ministry of Interior to create a website where residents could send messages about Internet crime. A member of the House of Representatives stated that each police station should have a unit designated to accept citizen reports about Internet crimes and update the Cybercrime Law.

The Egyptian government should tackle the development of rules to restrict online conduct and targeted prosecution, as shown in the TikTok cases. Finally, it is clear how effective Facebook, Twitter, and both contributed to the demise of powerful governments. what happened in Egypt was a phenomenon that the digital public witnessed and was easily accessible to anybody who had access to the Internet. The Arab Spring has been dubbed the "Social Network Revolution" because of its influence on newsfeeds, communication, accessibility, and speed in the digital space to face an oppressive state, so Egyptians turned to social media as a tool for change.

These incidents demonstrate how the Egyptian government is working more to censor and regulate Internet speech and social media. The employment of ambiguous and overbroad regulations, like the cybercrime law and the anti-terrorism statute, is just one of the strategies the government has employed to suppress online opposition. Targeting TikTok users also underscores larger issues with Egypt's right to privacy and freedom of speech. Concerns have been expressed concerning the possibility of misuse and the infringement of individual rights as a result of the government's use of surveillance technologies to track online activities. the incidents involving Egyptian TikTok users illustrate the need for stronger online privacy and

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[122] نواب يقترحون إعداد قانون جديد يلزم رواد مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي بالتسجيل بالرقم القومى ومحل الإقامة.. وتقترح جهات الداخلية تخصيص موقع الكترونى لتلقى بلاغات المواطنين. (4 March, 2017). اليوم السابع.
https://www.youm7.com/story/2017/3/4/%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%B3-%D8%A8%D9%88%D9%83-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B7%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%A9-%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A8-%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A5%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%8A%D9%84%D8%B2%D9%85-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AF/3126520

free speech protections. Governments and politicians must recognise the critical contributions that social media and the Internet make to the advancement of democratic values and human rights, and work to maintain the openness and accessibility of these platforms for all users.

The Egyptian government, for its part, is dedicated to ensuring that its economic dealings in information technology do not conflict with its duty to uphold and defend human rights. The Egyptian government employs spyware in its surveillance operations against independent media outlets and system opponents. State organizations have purchased sophisticated eavesdropping software. Evidently, the Internet is used to follow regime dissidents thanks to digital technologies. The Egyptian government has been secretly spying on its citizens without any shame or guilt, in flagrant violation of their rights to privacy, Internet freedom, and freedom of expression, as well as the Egyptian constitution, which guarantees the confidentiality of communications and correspondence With the use of that spy programs software, Egyptian security services are able to keep an eye on all kinds of communications, including phone conversations, SMS messages, emails, and chat programs, as well as to record what goes on around computers.

2.7 Internet Censorship tools

The Egyptian government has extensively deployed censorship techniques to limit and restrict access to online information. Access to websites and social media platforms can be blocked, and surveillance technology can be used to monitor and track online activities. In Egypt, the use of filtering techniques has generated concerns about freedom of expression and access to information. The government's efforts to restrict Internet content have resulted in the blocking of websites and platforms that are critical of the government or advocate opinions regarded to be harmful to the interests of the state. The Egyptian government has recently harassed activists, dissidents, members of civil society, and human rights organizations using surveillance software The scenario in Egypt for importing, running, and using surveillance software and hardware is extremely difficult. Many foreign firms involved in the production of this type of technology and software have a strong presence in Egypt, including Gamma Group, Blue Coast Systems, Hacking Team, Amesys, and cerebo.[123]

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[123]س, و. (July2017 ,b 10). إي مـيل - Cerebroنظام مرقب كنتي الفـرنسي: هي □ماراتلمصر. مت كارلو الولـية / MCD. https://www.mc-doualiya.com/chronicles/email-mcd/

After the revolution of January 25, 2011, FinFisher spyware[124] Several protesters stormed into the headquarters of the government security apparatus. The Egyptian government was found to have purchased FinFisher spyware, which was manufactured by the British company Gamma Group and imported by MCS Holdings, a local company that acted as Gamma Group's agent. Indeed, Activists claimed to have discovered a contract with Gamma International for €287,000 for a license to operate the FinFisher software at the secret police's headquarters after the overthrow of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. FinFisher, commonly known as FinSpy, is espionage software that is produced by IT Solutions Corporation and supplied through law enforcement channels. FinFisher may be covertly installed on targets' PCs by exploiting security flaws in unremarkable software update procedures.

Human rights organizations have criticized the company for selling these capabilities to countries known for eavesdropping on its citizens, such as those that are totalitarian or do not practice democracy, and putting political opponents in prison. According to emergency law, Egyptian security services may monitor communications, including phone calls, SMS messages, emails, and chat programs, by using this software. They can even utilize the PCs' cameras to record what is happening around them. They can even utilize the cameras built into the computers to capture what is happening around them. Among the popular desktop and mobile operating systems that FinSpy can track are Apple's iOS, Windows, macOS, and Linux. It makes it possible to utilize users' gadgets as listening devices. It can control cameras and microphones, listen in on conversations, and steal information from infected devices. Due to the nature of its products, Gamma International is not very transparent about its software to the general public. FinFisher may be used to decrypt WPA and get access to wireless networks, monitor activity on webmail and social media accounts, remotely observe computer operations on the victim's machine, find out what the victim is up to, and access Bluetooth devices, discover secret networks, and retrieve passwords and other data from online accounts using FinFisher. Gamma relates concerns about national security to the necessity for surveillance technology. FinFisher is undoubtedly a piece of technology that might be employed to monitor and suppress political opponents.[125]

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[124] FinFisher. (n.d.). DBpedia. https://dbpedia.org/page/FinFisher

[125] WikiLeaks - SpyFiles 4. (n.d.). https://wikileaks.org/spyfiles4/

Additionally, Packet filtering is a technique employed to control websites in Egypt. This means that search engine results pages are filtered. The packet filtering approach is primarily concerned with social content filtering, in which governments emphasize and prohibit queries that violate established societal values. Telecom companies and Internet service providers use Packet Logic hardware to perform Deep Packet Inspection (DPI), which gives them the ability to keep an eye on the Internet, eavesdrop on user communications, keep track of network traffic in real-time, and filter network traffic by blocking particular websites, programs, and protocols.[126]Content filtering is based on algorithms that match keywords and block or filter them. One of the least contentious methods of restricting Internet access is the use of Internet service provider (ISP) filters to prevent data from being searched for and transmitted. Although authoritarian governments have been compelled to employ coercion to persuade firms to block their Internet, Egypt has adopted this strategy to try to keep their societies in check. When and if the repressive regimes control the full Internet infrastructure, they frequently find it simple to exert pressure on the nations. Deep packet inspection (DPI) is a cutting-edge technology that Internet service providers may use to analyze data packet content and control network traffic.

Many Egyptian users began to complain about serious connectivity issues with Signal, prompting the app's American owner, Open Whisper Systems, to investigate the claims. Egypt has restricted access to Signal, the company stated on Twitter. Although Egyptian officials have not formally confirmed the app's deactivation, it is known that Egyptian security agencies monitor other programs such as Facebook and Facebook Messenger. In addition to the Void Campaign website, the Egyptian government blocked IP addresses and Internet protocol packages for many other websites, which resulted in the blockage of thousands of other websites that share the same IP address. In order to help governments spy on Internet users and enforce activity restrictions, governments employ software and services provided by Sandvine, which was founded in Waterloo, Canada, in 2001.Products from Sandvine are used in Egypt to block websites and access the Internet. several Internet and communications service providers in Egypt have implemented DPI technology in their

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[126] The State of Internet Censorship in Egypt. (2019c, November 15). OONI. https://ooni.org/post/egypt-internet-censorship/

infrastructure and had deployed Sandvine's devices to block websites. while authorities monitored Internet users and blocked hundreds of websites using Sandvine technology.[127]

The Supreme Council for Media Regulation (SCMR) persisted in its attempts to control the media environment by obstructing independent news websites, ordering web content providers to take down government-critical material, and publishing guidelines for reporting. High levels of self-censorship among Egyptian Internet users, particularly among independent media outlets and government opponents, are a result of criminal penalties, harassment, and monitoring. Indeed, Internet users' rights to privacy, freedom of speech, and the free flow of information are all violated by Sandvine's actions. Governments utilize Sandvine's services and products to forcibly identify and ban Internet users.

Sandvine is a corporation that specializes in creating, producing, and running hardware and software that is utilized by governments as tools for Internet monitoring. There are several agreements this corporation made with governments and businesses in Egypt, which pose a risk to people's rights to privacy, freedom of speech, and access to information. It was discovered technologies that permit Internet filtering was used in Egypt to execute website blocking and impede their outreach to certain online content.[128]

Sandvine engages in actions that are against the freedom of speech, the right to privacy, and the right to information access. Although only states and governments are indeed subject to international human rights obligations, international law has evolved in recent years to permit more corporate liability. Corporations are required to uphold human rights standards and ensure that none of their operations infringe against the fundamental liberties and rights guaranteed by international treaties, national constitutions, and legal frameworks. In addition to the Void Campaign website, the Egyptian authorities adopted the strategy of banning websites by blocking IP and Internet protocol packages for hundreds of other websites that share the same IP address. a technology known as Deep Packet Inspection, which denotes the inspection and monitoring of the depths of the international network, Cerebro, also known as Eagle, is a system that operates at the national level and enables the imposition of a thorough

[127] Marczak, B. (2020, May 8). BAD TRAFFIC: Sandvine's PacketLogic Devices Used to Deploy Government Spyware in Turkey and Redirect. The Citizen Lab. https://citizenlab.ca/2018/03/bad-traffic-sandvines-packetlogic-devices-deploy-government-spyware-turkey-syria/
[128] Egypt: Human rights organizations call on government to end internet censorship and website blocking - ARTICLE 19. (2020, November 4). ARTICLE 19. https://www.article19.org/resources/egypt-human-rights-organisations-call-on-government-to-end-internet-censorship-and-website-blocking/

monitoring process on all traffic on the international network in the country in question as well as the storage of information on network connections, including IP addresses.[129]

These movements have agreed on key principles that protect surveillance and monitoring standards while also defending people's digital rights and freedoms. One of the most important is the idea that lines of communication shouldn't be monitored unless there is a legitimate legal reason to do so. The political choice to undertake surveillance is made by governments who have demonstrated a willingness to spend millions of tax dollars to find out what is in citizens' email inboxes. In the meanwhile, Egypt's successive governments have placed a higher priority on policing media outlets than on building the nation's telecom infrastructure.

The Egyptian government has made considerable use of censoring tools to manage and limit public access to online material. These methods include social media and website blocking, as well as monitoring and tracking online activities using surveillance technologies. Concerns over the right to information access and freedom of speech have been raised by Egypt's usage of censorship techniques. The government's attempts to regulate Internet content have resulted in the blocking of websites and platforms that support political ideas that are perceived to be opposed to those of the state or that criticize the government. In Egypt, one of the most well-known instances of censorship is the temporary shutdown of websites and social media channels including Facebook,[130] Twitter, and YouTube.

Because of this, it has become more challenging for residents to acquire information and express their opinions online, particularly when traditional media sources are also under government control. The government has come under fire for utilizing these techniques to target political dissidents, campaigners, and regular people who post critical comments online. Targeting TikTok users by the government is a reflection of larger issues with online privacy and free speech in Egypt. Online opposition has been targeted by the government using a variety of strategies, including the employment of laws that are unduly broad and ambiguous, such as the anti-terrorism statute and the cybercrime law. The targeting of

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[129] Charges dropped against French company that sold spyware to Egypt. (2022, December 15). Middle East Monitor. https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20221215-charges-dropped-against-french-company-that-sold-spyware-to-egypt/

[130] Fahim, K. (2015, December 31). Egypt Officials Stop Facebook Program for Free Access to Internet. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/31/world/middleeast/egypt-officials-stop-facebook-program-for-free-access-to-internet.html

TikTok users also draws attention to how social media platforms are used, particularly by Egyptian youth, as a forum for political and social expression. Many TikTok users still utilize the medium to share their creativity and voice their opinions despite the dangers.

The challenge of Internet rights in Egypt continues to be complicated and dynamic. Concerns about freedom of expression, privacy, and access to information have been raised by the government's use of censorship tools and restrictions on social media. The hazards involved with expressing disagreement and political opinions online have been brought to light by the arrest of online activists and the targeting of TikTok users. These examples highlight the importance of social media and the Internet as platforms for free expression and the sharing of ideas, as well as the necessity for greater protection of online freedoms and human rights. The role of the government in policing social media and online content, however, continues to be a significant issue. Even if some limitations could be required to defend national security. It is crucial that these limitations are put into effect in a way that upholds democratic principles and human rights. Safeguarding Internet rights in Egypt necessitates a thorough and nuanced strategy that strikes a balance between the requirements of security and freedom of expression.

Chapter III: Internet rights in the constitutions in Tunisia

In this chapter, I will analyze the Tunisian legislative framework controlling Internet filtering to comparative norms for the protection of free expression and the right to privacy. Indeed, the restrictions imposed on Internet usage have undoubtedly risen as a result of the activation of censorship systems and the governing body's power to exert control over the Internet. The rise of social networks is the culture of Tunisian Internet users. However, governmental control also influences the internet. Access to digital information and communication technologies has grown dramatically as technology has advanced. One digital technology, in particular, has had a tremendous influence on politics and civil society in recent years: the Internet, with its huge blogging platforms and increasing variety of social media tools like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. These electronic tools have provided new, breathtakingly dynamic, and radically decentralized means for people and organizations to communicate and cooperate with one another for political and civic ends. This technology, in particular, has enabled Tunisian people to broaden their political and social liberty.

In Tunisia, freedom was associated with crime and was severely limited. Because they were the deadliest adversaries of autocracy and tyranny, all essential human rights connected to freedom were outlawed. To properly comprehend the current situation in Tunisia, we must first go back in time and analyze the level of freedom of expression in the decades preceding the revolution's outbreak. A historical perspective is required to comprehend the scope of the problem, as authoritarianism and dictatorship are not new. Journalists were regarded as the most dangerous opponents of the previous regimes because freedom of speech is inextricably related to press freedom, and both entail the ability to have an opinion, speak, and be heard.

Obviously, before 2011, local public and commercial media were tightly controlled. Tunisians, like other human beings and inhabitants of the globe, and Arab countries in general, value peace, justice, freedom of expression, freedom of thinking, individual liberty, and press freedom. They aim to live in the most respectful and equal way possible. Tunisia's Internet penetration rate now stands at 66.7 percent of the overall population at the start of 2022,[131] and this number is expected to increase further. However, while the Internet has enabled individuals to voice their displeasure with negative government behavior and stimulated the exchange of fresh political ideas, there is substantial controversy about how successful it is. This is owing to the large number of authoritarian nations that have attempted to regulate and censor the content of the Internet, and in more extreme situations, to completely restrict their citizens' access to the Internet. In the following section, I explain how Tunisia's repression and state-society interactions have deteriorated into deeper authoritarianism.

3.1 A brief history of Internet censorship in Tunisia

In this section, I will explain the repression and state-society relations in Tunisia which slide into deeper authoritarianism, there have been several studies on censorship on social media platforms in Tunisia from the time of Ben-Ali until the present, but these studies lacked the in-depth understanding. Internet censorship in Tunisia has a lengthy history that illustrates the conflict for the right to free speech. The violated situation of journalists and media workers in Tunisia during the Ben Ali period reflects the significant harm that fraud has caused to the nation's media and press freedom which makes it more difficult for the opposition to communicate via these traditional networks. Being the most significant high-class governing

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[131] Kemp, S. (2022, February 15). Digital 2022: Tunisia — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights. DataReportal – Global Digital Insights. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-tunisia#:~:text=There%20were%208.00%20million%20internet,percent)%20between%202021%20and%202022.

family in Tunisia and amassing enormous amounts of riches, social influence, and political clout was the primary and foremost goal of this new-rich clan, Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali. Was made up of the couple as well as several siblings and other relatives who had an unquenchable thirst for wealth and power and who contributed to the completion of this stereotypical mafia-type family structure (Nair 2011).[132] It can be claimed that from 1987 to 2011, corruption was the fundamental and most significant mode of operation for the whole institutional Tunisian system, from the bottom to the top, as a result of this structure infecting all levels of the institution.According to Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index,[133] Tunisia has a score of 40 out of 100, indicating a high level of corruption in the country. Tunisia ranks 74th out of 180 countries and territories in the index.

Ben Ali's regime lasted via repression a strong security apparatus that kept the public under control and crushed any political protest, Ben -Ali changed the constitution when he came to power to set limitations on presidential terms, but then removed those limitations. He occasionally ran for re-election with little to no opposition because the other presidential candidates were either disqualified or subjected to persecution. Through a particularly intricate clientelist structure in which the interests of the large Ben Ali clan were intimately engaged and played a key role in surveillance and filtering practices on the Internet. Ben Ali was able to dominate the majority of what can be called Tunisian civil society, as he had total control over several crucial and central organizations such as the main Ben Ali was able to construct a fairly complicated system in which the majority of Tunisia's politics, economics, and social life were directly controlled, in addition to the usual tools that most authoritarian political regimes typically have to ensure absolute control over all areas of society. Due to this position of complete power, Ben Ali's administration not only developed into a dictatorship but also became a predatory one in which a single clan turned the entire nation into a family enterprise.[134]

Media organizations were also crucial in this structurally rotten system. Assuring a high level of social control and public opinion manipulation, as well as the development and consolidation

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[132] Nair, M. (2011). Understanding and measuring the value of social media. Journal of Corporate Accounting & Finance, 22(3), 45–51. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcaf.20674

[133] Transparency International. (2019, November 25). Tunisia. Transparency.org. https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/tunisia

[134] Abbott, P. (n.d.). Ben Ali: the Tunisian autocrat who laid the foundations for his demise. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/ben-ali-the-tunisian-autocrat-who-laid-the-foundations-for-his-demise-124786

of a very profitable media environment for select privileged and well-connected stakeholders, Ben Ali was able to construct a media system in complete service of his diverse interests. The media industries in Arab nations may be analyzed as tools advancing various specialized political objectives to varied degrees. The media had a tough time covering the dictatorship of Ben Ali. These were repressed and censored; the state monopolized the media, and no alternative TV or radio station was permitted. All public stations were run by relatives of the dictatorship. Private TV and radio stations were permitted starting in the 2000s, although they were also governed by members of the Ben Ali family or other supporters of the government. Additionally, the editorial material was routinely censored by the government, either through the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Communication, or the Tunisian External Communication Agency (ATCE), which served as a vehicle for propaganda, deceit, and repression under the Ben Ali regime.[135]

The president made it clear that only material that "respects the deontology and ethics of excellent journalism" will be allowed to remain unedited. The president gave the impression that anything that, in the government's opinion, does not adhere to this standard may once more be prohibited. Following the relaxation of censorship in January, a Tunisian court ordered the Tunisian Internet Agency (ATI) to prohibit all pornographic websites because they posed a threat to children and went against Islamic principles. The ATI is a technical organization where censorship tools are still present. The CIA has never participated in the selection of websites that should be blocked. The 1975 Press Code was another tool used by Ben Ali's regime to restrict information and strictly regulate free expression.[136] All publishers were required to provide a copy of their books before distribution under the "legal deposit" requirement.[137] With the use of this gatekeeping strategy, the regime's regulators were able to regulate all media material and punish any journalists who opposed it with hefty fines and occasionally prison terms. Defamation was utilized as a politically influenced legal tactic during this administration to accuse and imprison independent journalists and political dissidents. Under Ben Ali, Tunisia's Internet had a history of government monopoly; it was an

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[135] Al Jazeera. (2011, January 17). Tunisia: A media led revolution? Opinions | Al Jazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2011/1/17/tunisia-a-media-led-revolution

[136] el-Issawi, F. (2012, July 10). Tunisian Media in Transition. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/07/10/tunisian-media-in-transition-pub-48817

[137] Jaidi, M. A. (2020, September 2). The Tunisian Government's Policy Agenda Through 24 Draft Laws. Legal Agenda. https://english.legal-agenda.com/the-tunisian-governments-policy-agenda-through-24-draft-laws/

authoritarian tool, at the forefront of state control and self-promotion rather than acting as a tool for real answerability of the rulers to the ruled in 1991, Tunisia launched its first Internet service as a restricted tool. In Tunisia, the Internet has been filtered by censorship by the government for more than ten years. Internet censorship has a dreadful history in Tunisia.

From 2000 onward, Internet platforms presented a new problem for the Ben Ali government; the systematic banning of activist homepages, Facebook, and YouTube was standard procedure. Al-Nahdah Net, Al-Kalima, Tunis News, and Al-Bawwaba, among other important news sources, had their websites restricted in Tunisia for more than ten years. The main Tunisian ISP is the Tunisian Internet Agency,[138] sometimes referred to as ATI, and was founded on March 12, 1996. It has the same objective of promoting Internet usage in the nation and is managed by the Ministry of Telecommunication Technologies. The Tunisian Internet's main center was intended to be ATI. By connecting the various ISPs and connecting them to the Internet outside via undersea and land cables controlled by Tunisie Telecom, it serves as the country's primary Internet exchange point. The ATI served as the state's primary traffic interception unit as a result of its key location within the country's network. However, these news websites continued to serve as active forums for debate and news coverage of Tunisian politics abroad.[139]

As opposed to the coalitions, put together under former president Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, in 2009 and 2010, Tunisia was referred to be an "Internet enemy" due to the massive monitoring and filtering techniques used by Zeina El Abidin Ben Ali's former government created after 2011 were significantly different.[140] The Internet infrastructure of Tunisia is made up of several ISPs, with network backbone control being exercised by a government body that also performs centralized filtering. To take over the management of Tunisia's Internet backbone and DNS services from the Regional Institute for Computer Sciences and Telecommunications (IRSIT) in Tunis, the Tunisian Ministry of Communications established the Tunisian Internet Agency (ATI) in 1996. The law requires public Internet providers to keep an eye on user access to block

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[138] Abrougui, A. (2017, January 9). "The Internet is freedom": Index speaks to Tunisian Internet Agency chief. Index on Censorship. https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2012/02/tunisia-internet-moez-chakchouk/

[139] Borodich, A. (2021, December 15). Tunisian Internet Agency (ATI) and Universa Hub Africa Sign Strategic Partnership for National Blockchain. Medium. https://borodich.medium.com/tunisian-internet-agency-ati-and-universa-hub-africa-sign-strategic-partnership-for-national-a7872ba1002f

[140] S. (2019, June 16). Tunisia Embraces Internet Freedom. SMEX. https://smex.org/tunisia-embraces-internet-freedom/

access to "restricted" information. As a result, although ATI admits that it formerly utilized Blue Coat, McAfee, and Net lab technologies, it doesn't reveal what it uses as of 2010.[141]The cafés use a variety of strategies to carry out this directive, all computer displays are positioned so that administrators can see them, while in others, patrons must show identification to enter. Tunisia's infrastructure is centralized, which facilitates consistent This fact has limited the true advantages of the liberalization of the telecom sector, centralized control over the telecommunications network, and imposed fundamental limitations on the accessibility of Internet services in Tunisia (Konan & vanAssche, 2004).[142]

Tunisia Telecom, the only operator authorized to supply international uplink bandwidth to other nations, also provided the infrastructure for tying together ISPs.A public corporation controls a sizeable amount of Tunisia's physical Internet infrastructure, in addition to the key locations for interconnection and international transit, with the execution of all of these procedures. Tunisia Telecom controls the last mile of Internet provision, which connects Internet service providers to their customers. on January 11, 2011, Tunisia had an unexpected moment in Internet history. Following weeks of violent anti-government demonstrations across the nation during the Arab Spring, Tunisian President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali pledged complete freedom of information and unrestricted access to the Internet. This allowed it to be confirmed that websites typically blocked on Tunisian soil, including those of significant human rights organizations, were freely accessible to Tunisian Web users. Street pressure forced the fall of an autocratic rule and a strict censorship policy that had been in place for years. However, the president's address gave the administration the freedom to change its mind about the choice. Ten significant changes to the government have occurred in Tunisia since 2011, and public confidence in political parties and institutions has drastically decreased. local government in the run-up to the elections to create distinct policy platforms and communication plans. This should aid parties in standing out from the competition in personality-driven politics.[143]

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[141] West Censoring East: The Use of Western Technologies by Middle East Censors, 2010-2011 | OpenNet Initiative. (n.d.). https://opennet.net/west-censoring-east-the-use-western-technologies-middle-east-censors-2010-2011

[142] Van Assche, A., & Konan, D. E. (2004). Assessing the Benefits of Telecommunications Liberalization to Tunisia. EcoMod2004.

[143] Paciello, M. C. (2011). Tunisia: Changes and challenges of political transition. Social Science Research Network. https://iris.unive.it/handle/10278/3701713

The Arab Spring and the overthrow of authoritarian governments in Tunisia have reignited the debate on the implications of social media networks for organizational strategies for political mobilization. During the wave of Arab protests in late 2010 and early 2011, Tunisia was one of the countries to overthrow its dictator, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, but it was also the only country among those participating to maintain its steadfast commitment to establishing a democratic government. Due to censorship, speech restrictions, fear, and the suppression of government criticism throughout Tunisia's 24 years of dictatorship under the Ben Ali regime, few individuals ventured to discuss the political situation or the violation of human rights. Tunisia was once one of the Arab nations that were regarded as one of the country's most repressive where a policy of blocking is practiced without discrimination and bloggers are frequently suspended. The Ben Ali regime was overthrown, and the interim government immediately ended all forms of Internet censorship. As a result, sophisticated programs and systems that had been used to monitor the web and regulate its various contents primarily the technical filtering and deletion of published materials that would affect the Internet were no longer in use.

In November 2013 the Tunisian Technical Telecommunication Agency (ATT), a new agency, was established by state decree without the public's input, the Tunisian government declared. Following the establishment of a new "investigative" telecom agency, Tunisian activists worry that widespread monitoring and Internet restriction may return to their nation. The years of the Brotherhood's leadership in Tunisia, which lasted from 2011 to 2021, are referred to by some local observers as the "black decade"[144] in the country's history because of the unparalleled levels of censorship occurred there. The contradictory state policy that boosts and closely regulates public discussions and public access to content frames Internet users. Social media, on the other hand, has provided terrorists the opportunity to directly engage their target

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[144] العشرية السوداء".. كيف يرى التونسيون سنوات ح؟□؟خوان" .(18 November, 2021).
https://www.skynewsarabia.com/middle-east/1480146-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%A1-
%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%89-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86-
%D8%B3%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%85-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%95%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%9F

audience and either disseminate terror or recruit (Alfifi et al. 2018).[145] Indeed, utilizing Facebook and other social media platforms for political objectives is a crime to the authority. The Tunisian government views the Internet as a battleground to pursue those people who officials feel are breaking the law. Governmental institutions exist. However, there are systems in place for the government to impose more limitations on the Internet at any moment. Suspects of terrorism have been identified by the authorities as the main focus of Internet surveillance. on 25 July 2014, The National Unit for Research into Terrorism Crimes of the competent services of the General Directorate of National Security managed to apprehend, one of the primary administrators of one of the takfiri pages on the social network "Facebook" and he was also detained and his media device was seized after consulting the Public Prosecution. On the Internet, the person in question supports and spreads the Salafi-jihadi takfiri ideology and has posted a number of inciting statements that support terrorism and foment discord, rejecting state institutions.

In 2014 The three biggest telecom providers in Tunisia banned the usage of calling applications like Skype and Viber over their 3G networks, citing the apps' impact on traffic. In 2015, The Tunisian security services were unsuccessful in lobbying for the passage of draught Law No. 25/2015. They claimed that this law would prevent attacks on the armed forces. Still, it actually limited freedom of expression by punishing online speech that was seen as "insulting" to the police and exempting security forces from criminal liability when using excessive force. Law No. 25/2015, however, was not passed as a result of the pressure activists applied.[146]

3.2 Constitutional rights

This section examine Tunisia's constitutional Internet rights in depth, including any objections or limitations to these rights. This will contribute to a better understanding of Tunisia's legal and political landscape regarding Internet freedom and access. In recent years, the Internet has evolved into a critical instrument for communication, information exchange, and access to knowledge. As a result, defending constitutional rights relating to the Internet has grown in

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[145] Afifi, T. D., Zamanzadeh, N., Harrison, K., & Callejas, M. A. (2018). WIRED: The impact of media and technology use on stress (cortisol) and inflammation (interleukin IL-6) in fast paced families. Computers in Human Behavior, 81, 265–273. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.12.010

[146] Mapping VOIPs Service Providers Blockage in the MENA Region. (n.d.). Diplo Internet Governance Community. http://www.diplointernetgovernance.org/profiles/blogs/mapping-voips-service-providers-blockage-in-the-mena-region

importance in Tunisia.The 2014 Constitution of Tunisia recognizes and protects Internet freedom and access as fundamental rights. This section will evaluate Tunisia's constitutional Internet rights, including the relevant constitutional provisions that guarantee freedom of opinion, thought, expression, information, publication, and access to information and communication networks. It will also investigate any relevant laws or policies enacted to protect these rights. concerns have been raised about the government's commitment to upholding these rights in practice, despite these constitutional safeguards. Internet censorship and restrictions on freedom of expression remain major concerns in Tunisia, raising concerns about the government's adherence to its constitutional obligations.

In 2010, during Constitutional changes in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, there were unprecedented nationwide violent protests over freedom of expression and political constraints. Following an interim period of turbulent successions at the leadership of the state, general elections one year later resulted in the election of a Constituent Assembly to design a new constitution. Following months of protestsThe primary responsibility of the National Constituent Assembly, which was chosen in October 2011, was to write the Second Republic of Tunisia's new constitution.After Tunisia's 2011 uprising against Zine Abidine Ben Ali, Tensions have been high since the assaults, and the country has become divided between those who want tougher security measures and others who fear repression of human rights. A split in Nidaa Tounes[147] developed. To prevent conflicts with the new Tunisian constitution, it becomes increasingly necessary to evaluate laws passed under Ben Ali's authoritarian rule. For instance, it is impossible to reconcile the state's exclusions from general duties with regard to the processing of personal data and these exemptions should be evaluated right away. in light of Article 49 declaring "The limitations that can be imposed on the exercise of the rights and freedoms guaranteed in this Constitution will be established by law, without compromising their essence. Any such restrictions can only be implemented when they are necessary to a civil and democratic state, when they are necessary to protect the rights of others, or when they are necessary for the sake of public order, national defense, public health, or public morals. This necessitates proportionality in the limitations placed on the freedoms and rights that are accorded to all people. The Tunisian legislative system for the protection of personal data has

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[147] Ahram Online - Tunisia's ruling party faces splits as lawmakers quit. (n.d.). https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentPrint/2/0/180456/World/0/Tunisias-ruling-party-faces-splits-as-lawmakers-qu.aspx

many of the same flaws as the Ben Ali administration, which ultimately contributed to its downfall. Since the overthrow of Ben Ali, Tunisia has been hailed as an example of a democratic transition with a new constitution and free elections.Despite these legal protections, censorship and restrictions on freedom of expression in Tunisia have surfaced. Before 2011, the government blocked access to certain websites and social media platforms, The previous government blocked websites run by the whole political opposition as well as terrorist organizations. Video-sharing websites like YouTube and Dailymotion were also blocked by the regime. The Tunisian government briefly kept track of people's Facebook login details. All websites that were pornographic were likewise blocked. and there have been cases of people being arrested or prosecuted for their online expression.

The 2011 Arab Spring upheavals, mostly avoided the violent turmoil that other governments experienced. The drafting process of the new Tunisian Constitution began in February 2012, with significant disagreement between Islamists and secularists. On August 14, 2012, the Assembly issued the first draft constitution, followed by a second draft on December 14, 2012.[148] On June 1, 2013, the committee in charge of drafting the constitution reached an agreement and submitted a draft to the provisional legislature. Given that it was the outcome of several concessions made by numerous political and ideological forces within the context of a national discussion, it is known as a consensual constitution. Attempts to enact new laws restricting Internet freedom, as there have been several attempts by the successive regimes in power since Ben Ali's overthrow to limit and restrict freedom of speech online. These regimes have attempted to enact new laws that would return Tunisians to the pre-revolutionary era and have the effect of limiting speech and restricting freedom of expression. We refer to the most recent legislative proposal put out by numerous members of the "Nidaa Tounes"[149] party to regulate content posted on websites and social media channels. The critical tone of this ad stood out, enraging Tunisian online activists and journalists. The party was established in 2012 and had politicians from the left, center, and right as well as former members of deposed strongman Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. As a result of numerous attempts to enact new legislation that would take Tunisians back to the pre-revolutionary era, with its associated stifling of speech and assault on freedom of expression, the various governments that came into power after Ben Ali's departure sought to limit and restrict freedom of expression on the Internet.

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[148] Constitutional history of Tunisia. (n.d.). ConstitutionNet. https://constitutionnet.org/country/tunisia

[149] Calvin-Smith, G., & Colombel, M. (2016, January 15). Across Africa - Tunisia: Nidaa Tounes faces split as lawmakers quit. France 24. https://www.france24.com/en/20160116-across-africa-kabila-national-dialogue-nidaa-tounes-prison-band-grammy-julien-sinzogan

According to the executive branch, in line with the French model, the 2014 Constitution calls for a semi-presidential government, but the Prime Minister, who is chosen from Parliament by the President but in collaboration with the latter, will have much more authority. Apart from the ministers of defense and foreign affairs, all cabinet ministers are appointed by the prime minister. These two ministries are solely under the President's supervision. The Prime Minister oversees the government and negotiates technical international agreements. The Prime Minister calls a meeting of the Council of Ministers and sets the agenda. The Head of State and President of the Republic, who represents its unity, independence, and continuity, exercises broad executive authority.[150]

In January 2014, two years after the uprising that resulted in President Ben Ali's ouster, a large majority of Tunisians cast ballots to adopt the Constitution of the Second Republic of Tunisia. Human rights were proclaimed to be the primary guiding concept in the new constitution. One of the many cutting-edge human rights measures contained in the new constitution is the preamble, which declares Tunisia to be respectful of human values and universal human rights principles. The second chapter focuses on the defense of each citizen's rights and liberties. In a broader sense, the approval of the Tunisian Constitution of 2014 signifies a substantial change in the law.

In Tunisia, the 2014 Constitution recognizes and protects Internet freedom and access as fundamental rights. Article 19 of the Constitution guarantees the right to privacy, including the right to privacy in communication and correspondence. This provision could be interpreted to include online privacy protection and data protection.[151] Overall, declaring a state of emergency can be an effective way for a government to respond to a crisis or a threat to its power. According to article 24 and article 29, respectively, "The State should protect the secrecy of correspondence, communications, and personal data" and "No person may be arrested or detained unless apprehended during the commission of a crime or on the basis of judicial order".[152]

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[150] Tunisia 2014 Constitution - Constitute. (n.d.).
https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Tunisia_2014?lang=en
[151] Centre for Internet & Human Rights. (2016, July 12). https://cihr.eu/policy-analysis-data-protection-in-tunisia-a-legal-illusion/

[152] Tunisia 2014 Constitution - Constitute. (n.d.).
https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Tunisia_2014?lang=en

Tunisia's constitution guarantees several Internet and digital technology-related rights. Article 31 of Tunisia's 2014 Constitution, in specific, ensures the right to use information and communication technology, including the Internet.Despite these constitutional guarantees, there have been concerns in Tunisia about the government's use of Internet censorship and surveillance. For example, in 2018, the government passed a contentious law allowing it to monitor citizens' online activities without a judicial order, raising concerns about privacy violations. Article 32 of the Constitution states that "every citizen has the right to access information and communication networks" and that "freedom of opinion, thought, expression, information, and publication is guaranteed.

Freedom of expression and the media are guaranteed under the Tunisian constitution, and Article 38 of the 2022 Constitution "states" "The state guarantees the right to information and the right of access to information and communication networks" which highlights the importance of access to information and communication networks in fostering democratic values, openness, and accountability. Individuals have the right to seek and receive information, as well as to express themselves and interact with others, under this provision. Nonetheless, the government has been known to censor some websites and social media platforms. The Tunisian government has been known to block websites and social media platforms that are considered critical of the government, incite dissent or protest or contain offensive or immoral content.Despite these constitutional guarantees, Tunisia's Internet freedom has faced challenges in recent years. During times of political unrest, the government has been accused of blocking websites and social media platforms. Furthermore, there have been concerns raised about the use of surveillance technology to monitor Internet activity and limit online freedom of expression.

On another side, it is clear that article 55 of the Constitution specifies the circumstances under which restrictions on rights and freedoms may be imposed. This article states that any limitations must be imposed by law and must not jeopardize the essence of the right or freedom in question. Limitations must also be justified for specific reasons, such as the preservation of others' rights, public order, national defense, public health, or public morals. so the Constitution grants citizens some fundamental rights and liberties, although these rights are subject to limitations under specific conditions. These constraints must be set by legislation, must not jeopardize the nature of the right or freedom, must be justified, and must be appropriate to the goal desired.

While Tunisia's Law on Terrorist Acts aims to address legitimate security issues, it has also prompted worries about potential abuses of power and restrictions on fundamental liberties. It

is critical, as with any anti-terrorism legislation, to carefully balance security considerations with the protection of human rights and civil liberties. the conflict between the necessity for security and the protection of human rights and freedom of speech is a complicated issue. One of the most serious problems with anti-terrorism legislation is that it frequently involves censorship or restrictions on free expression. Laws, for example, may mandate Internet service providers to block specific websites or restrict access to specific categories of content. While these regulations may be justified as required to prevent terrorist activities, they can also limit free speech and people's capacity to express their beliefs and ideas. Furthermore, legislation aimed at preventing terrorism frequently includes enhanced surveillance and monitoring of persons. This can include gathering personal information and monitoring online activities. While these procedures may be required to detect possible threats, they may also raise concerns about privacy and individuals' rights to be free from unwarranted surveillance.[153]

Tunisia's parliament passed a new cybercrime law in 2020, which has been criticized by human rights organizations for its potential to restrict online expression and privacy. The law criminalizes the spread of "false information" online and grants the government broad powers to monitor online communications, for example, a blogger received a six-month prison sentence for criticizing the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic on Facebook. Despite constitutional guarantees of free expression, there have been cases of individuals being arrested and prosecuted for expressing their opinions online.[154]

The fundamental problem is that the law seems to infringe on civil freedoms and human rights, although being justified as a vital step to prevent terrorism. No one should be subjected to censorship, not even in an emergency, and it should be clearly specified in the legislation. The fact that the law broadens the definition of terrorism and terrorist acts raises one of the most serious objections raised against it, since it may be used to target people or organizations who aren't genuinely engaged in terrorist operations. This expansive definition might also be applied to stifle political dissent or resistance, as authoritarian governments frequently do. while Tunisia's constitution protects Internet-related rights, there have been concerns about the government's implementation of these guarantees. The Tunisian government must ensure that these constitutional rights are upheld and that individuals are not subjected to censorship or prosecution for exercising their right to free expression online. while Tunisia's constitution

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[153] State of Surveillance Tunisia. (n.d.-b). Privacy International. https://privacyinternational.org/state-privacy/1012/state-surveillance-tunisia

[154] Staff, R. (2020, July 14). Tunisia sentences woman to six months for Koranic Facebook joke. U.S. https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-tunisia-rights-idUKKCN24F1ZC

recognizes the importance of protecting free expression and Internet freedom, the government must work to ensure that these rights are fully respected and protected in practice.

3.3 Telecommunications Law and Regulation

Ben Ali's repressive regulations still affect and continue to pose a danger to Internet freedom. The Telecommunications Code, a set of laws and rules that control the nation's telecommunications business, governs telecommunications in Tunisia. The Telecommunications Code was initially passed in 2001 and has since undergone numerous revisions. The nation's communications sector. The law created the legal foundation for the sector, with provisions for licensing telecom service providers and rules governing telecom networks and services.[155]

The Ben Ali government blocked access to the Internet and social media sites during the 2011 Tunisian revolution to quell demonstrations and keep control. Indeed, The government of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali made an effort to repress protests and keep power during the 2011 Tunisian revolution by restricting access to the Internet and social media platforms. This action was perceived as an attempt to stifle information and stop protesters from organizing and communicating online. Widespread criticism of the government's conduct was expressed both nationally and abroad. As a result, a large number of Tunisians protested in the streets against censorship and demanded more freedom of speech and access to information. After overthrowing the Ben-Ali government, Tunisia made great strides toward protecting the right to free speech and privacy in the country's telecom industry.[156]

The Telecommunications Law has undergone numerous revisions. For instance, the code was changed in 2009 to mandate that Internet service providers (ISPs) keep records of their clients' online actions for up to six months. This amendment was severely criticized for violating people's privacy. Anyone found guilty of "using public communications networks to offend or annoy others" may face up to two years in prison and/or a fine, according to Article 86 of the Telecommunications Code "Any person who intentionally offends others or disturbs their comfort through public telecommunications networks shall be punished with imprisonment for a period ranging from one to two years and a fine of one hundred to one thousand dinars. [157]The law was selectively applied by the Ben Ali government in order to arrest journalists and

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[155] ILA. (n.d.-c). https://internetlegislationatlas.org/#/countries/Tunisia/laws/72

[156] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2011, February 23). Jasmine Revolution | Tunisia, Arab Spring, Timeline, & Results. Encyclopedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/event/Jasmine-Revolution

[157] ILA. (n.d.-d). https://internetlegislationatlas.org/#/countries/Tunisia/frameworks/content-regulation

political opponents. After receiving intense criticism for violating people's right to privacy, this article was ultimately struck down by a judge in 2011. Another change to the code was made in 2018 to mandate that telecom service provider put in place technical safeguards to defend their networks and services against cyberattacks. The amendment also set forth consequences for disregarding these demands.[158]

The National Telecommunications Authority (INT) was created under the Telecommunications Code to serve as Tunisia's telecom regulating authority. The INT is in responsibility of granting licences to and overseeing telecom companies, as well as making sure the Telecommunications Code is adhered to. Concerns about the government using telecommunications infrastructure to monitor and regulate internet activities have remained despite the Telecommunications Code's legal framework. The government has been known to block access to websites and social media platforms, monitor online interactions, and locate people who are seen to be threats.This has prompted calls for greater transparency and accountability in telecommunications regulation in Tunisia, as well as greater protection of free expression and privacy rights.[159]

The Tunisian Telecommunications Code has multiple articles on censorship, including the following: The Tunisian Telecommunications code's article 86 is the section most frequently cited about censorship. As mentioned before, it makes it illegal to use telecommunication networks to "harm public order and national security" and carries jail time and fines as punishments. The government has arrested journalists and political opponents using this law to control online material. The government is given the power to "supervise and monitor" telecommunications networks and services as well as "take all necessary steps to preserve their integrity and security" by Articles 5 and 6 which give the government discretionary power over the assignment of prior permission for the provision of telecommunications services. Entrusting these discretionary rights to public authorities allows them to control, even directly, the freedom of individuals to access the Internet network.[160]

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[158] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (n.d.-a). Refworld | Freedom on the Net 2018 - Tunisia. Refworld. https://www.refworld.org/docid/5be16af4108.html
[159] globalEDGE. (n.d.). Tunisia: National Telecommunications Authority (INT) >> globalEDGE: Your source for Global Business Knowledge. https://globaledge.msu.edu/global-resources/resource/10434
[160] Tunisia: Digital Communications Code (May 2020)- Legal Analysis - ARTICLE 19. (2020, December 9). ARTICLE 19. https://www.article19.org/resources/tunisia-digital-communications-code-may-2020-legal-analysis/

According to article 25 Internet service providers (ISPs) are required to "take all necessary measures to prohibit access to illegal content or content that is contrary to public order or morality". The government is given the power to "suspend or terminate telecommunications services in instances of emergency or for reasons of national security" By Article 39 of Tunisia's Telecommunications Code, "the regulatory authority may, by reasoned order and within the limits of proportionality, take any measure necessary to ensure the continuity of public communications services" in the event of a threat to public order or national security. This article has been used as justification for blocking Internet access when there is political unrest because it enables the government to take action to maintain the continuity of public communications services in the event of a threat to public safety or order. But Article 39 of the Code needs to define phrases like "public order" and "national security" more precisely to prevent its misuse as an excuse for censorship and surveillance.[161]

Tunisia has a history of authoritarianism, and the government has a history of restricting freedom of expression and access to information. This has raised fears that the regulations controlling the telecommunications industry could be used to oppress rather than defend individual rights. the rules and regulations governing the telecommunications industry are implemented in a way that not supports privacy, and freedom of expression is one of the primary problems. Ultimately, Internet rights protection in Tunisia remains a complex and changing issue.

3.4 The role of government in controlling social media

Tunisia experienced a wave of protests in January 2011 that are mostly coordinated and mobilized via social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. Tunisians have made extensive use of the Internet throughout the Tunisian revolution, particularly the social network platform. Despite the fact that these media are primarily intended for personal expression, they are also used for political speech and action. Examples include posting videos on YouTube criticizing government actions or using photos and videos taken with mobile phones during protests and encounters with the police. The Web's wide accessibility and low cost make it possible for people to share events and interests with others in their networks. The resources accessible to participants in social and political fights were increased by information on the Internet that was

[161] Zemni, S. (2015). The Extraordinary Politics of the Tunisian Revolution: The Process of Constitution Making. Mediterranean Politics, 20(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2013.874108

unavailable in the traditional media This was particularly crucial under Ben Ali's autocratic rule.Internet use encourages protests under authoritarian governments. Despite authoritarian attempts to regulate cyberspace, the adoption of the Internet has led to a significant shift in citizens' access to information under authoritarian governments. The use of the Internet makes it simpler for opposition groups to successfully organize a public outcry in the streets, increasing the likelihood of protests. As a result, the Internet has made it possible for activists, particularly in authoritarian regimes, to successfully reach out to protests.[162]

Filtering and blocking are two of the main methods the Tunisian government uses to regulate social media. Even though access is still limited, Internet usage in Tunisia has increased dramatically in recent years. One of the most oppressive Internet censoring systems in the world is Tunisia's multilayered one. As part of its plan to regulate the Internet, the government uses three primary strategies. technological censorship, censorship after publishing, and proactive manipulation. The extension of this system has drawn criticism from users, and 2010 saw a wave of unprecedented censorship that hit general blogs, photo-sharing websites, and other services. The government issues instructions to ISPs about four categories of content that it deems objectionable: pornographic or sexually explicit material, political criticism of the government, discussions of human rights in Tunisia, and tools or technology that allow users to get around the government's restrictions. [163]

A number of websites and online platforms that the government considers to be anti-government or to be breaking international law have had their access to the Internet restricted. The Tunisian government has also been known to monitor online conversations and behavior using surveillance and monitoring equipment. the government keeps an eye on online activities using sophisticated surveillance technologies like malware and spyware. Social media is still being watched and regulated in some ways. The Tunisian parliament adopts a new constitution with clauses guaranteeing access to justice, and defending the freedom of expression. In Tunisia, the usage of social media is expanding quickly, with Facebook and Twitter becoming as important venues for political organizing and dialogue. A new social media regulation bill is passed by the Tunisian parliament, mandating that social media businesses register with the government and maintain a physical presence in the nation, The governments of Tunisia have

[162] Ruijgrok, K. (2016). From the web to the streets: internet and protests under authoritarian regimes. Democratization, 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2016.1223630

[163] Black, I. (2017, November 26). WikiLeaks cables: Tunisia blocks site reporting "hatred" of first lady. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/07/wikileaks-tunisia-first-lady

demonstrated individual Twitter page blocking seems to be the newest trend, and the capacity and desire to impose restrictions on certain Twitter accounts, silencing some voices while nevertheless preserving access to a very important communication channel.[164]

However, the Tunisian government has restricted freedom of expression by using legal means to control online information. laws. Social media was crucial in organizing protests and disseminating information throughout the revolution. In response, the government placed limitations on the Internet and social media, but this did not stop people from using these platforms to organize and communicate. After the revolution, the government changed its stance toward social media and the Internet to one that was more liberal in recognition of its contribution to the promotion of political involvement and the right to free speech. However, the Tunisian government has restricted freedom of expression by using legal means to control online information. Human rights organizations have criticized laws like the 2018 Law on the Protection of Personal Data and the 2013 Law on Cybercrime for having the potential to be used to stifle free expression and target political dissidents. Tunisian activists are still using online and social media platforms to spread the word about crucial problems with democracy, civil liberties, and human rights. They run the risk of facing harassment, detention, or legal action as a result of their Internet actions.In Tunisia, where numerous Ben-Ali-era regulations that unjustly punish free speech have been kept, criminal charges for openly criticizing the government are nothing new. Between 2017 and 2020, an increasing number of bloggers or activists were the subject of criminal investigations or prosecutions for offences like defamation, derision of public figures, and "harming" others via telecommunication networks, all in the name of peacefully exercising their First Amendment rights.[165]

President Kais Saied of Tunisia signed a decree in 2022[166] that stated that distributing "false news" might result in a five-year prison sentence and fine. If top authorities are the intended target of the false information, a sentence of up to 10 years may be imposed. "Deliberately using communication networks and information systems to manufacture, promote, publish, or distribute false information or rumors" is the infraction, according to Saied's edict.This ruling

[164] Tunisia and Bahrain Block Individual Twitter Pages. (2010, January 4). Global Voices Advox. https://advox.globalvoices.org/2010/01/04/tunisia-and-bahrain-block-individual-twitter-pages/

[165] Amnesty International. (2022b, December 14). Tunisia: Cybercrime law investigations expose new threats to freedom of expression. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/tunisia-cybercrime-law-investigations-expose-new-threats-to-freedom-of-expression/

[166] Reuters. (2022, September 16). Tunisian journalists denounce president's law on prison terms for false information. https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/tunisian-journalists-denounce-presidents-law-prison-terms-false-information-2022-09-16/

represents a fresh catastrophe for rights and liberties. The sanctions for publishing on any networks strike a grave blow to the revolutionary ideals that gave all Tunisians freedom

3.5 Authoritarian regimes in Tunisia

The authoritarian regime in Tunisia has a history of blocking access to websites and social media platforms, monitoring online conversations, and arresting people for expressing critical views online. Tunisia's approach to Internet censorship has been varied and dynamic, with initiatives to encourage Internet freedom as well as worries about government control and monitoring of online activities. During previous President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's government, Tunisia's approach to Internet censorship was characterized by stringent control and monitoring of online activity. The government-run Tunisian Internet Agency was in charge of banning access to websites and social media platforms that were critical of Tunisia. This agency used a variety of tactics to censor content, including restricting certain IP addresses, keywords, and websites. Those who voiced their displeasure online may face arrest and imprisonment. Bloggers, activists, and other Internet users who utilized the Internet to express political opposition or dissent were routinely targeted by the government. The government found these persons by monitoring their online behavior.[167]

The Ben Ali dictatorship also monitored online activity and tracked individual whereabouts using technology from companies such as Gamma Group and Hacking Team. Human rights and civil society organizations were horrified by the Ben Ali regime's actions. The Ben Ali regime's rigorous regulation and monitoring of online activity. It was seen as a breach of basic human rights and liberties, and it was utilized to crush political opposition and protest. Regardless, some people and organizations used the Internet to bypass official restrictions and express themselves, often in great personal danger.[168]

Several harsh rules were used to limit Internet content under the previous regime. The existing repressive infrastructure is a legacy of the authoritarian past that poses challenges to Tunisia's hopeful political future. Tunisia was governed by autocratic monarchs. The long-standing dictator was then overthrown by the Arab Spring. Ben Ali stayed in power for around 23 years

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[167] Wagner, B. (2012). Push-button-autocracy in Tunisia: Analysing the role of Internet infrastructure, institutions, and international markets in creating a Tunisian censorship regime. Telecommunications Policy, 36(6), 484–492. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.telpol.2012.04.007

[168] Articles, T. S. (2015, August 1). Hacking Team : the company that spied on you during the Tunisian revolution! Nawaat. https://nawaat.org/2015/08/01/hacking-team-the-company-that-spied-on-you-during-the-tunisian-revolution/

before being forced to step down on January 14, 2011, due to rising opposition due to the economic crisis (Ryan, 2011).[169]

Tunisia started its democratic transition after a longstanding tyrant was overthrown in 2011, and its people now have a wide range of political rights and online expression. To fully consolidate democracy, however, there are still issues with freedom of expression and security concerns, The country has a strong information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, and officials are attempting to increase access outside of large cities. However, uploading online anything critical of the president, the police, or the government might result in prosecution. In 2013, the government put up a new draft law allowing for heightened monitoring and surveillance of online communications for the sake of national security. As a result, civil society and human rights organizations protested and criticized the decision, saying that the rule was too broad and might be used to stifle dissent and violate people's right to privacy.[170]

Following the uprisings, a democratic government took a long time to establish. there were widespread fears that a religious interpretation of human rights would move Tunisia away from universal human rights. Tensions in the process of creating a new constitution were particularly acute between secularists and Islamic. Freedom of speech and the right to privacy was incorporated as essential rights in a new constitution that was ratified in 2014. In practice, implementing and enforcing these rights can be difficult. Governments may use national security concerns to justify restrictions on free speech or privacy in some situations, resulting in violations of these rights. Furthermore, the distinction between free speech and hate speech is frequently blurred, making it difficult to implement laws and regulations.

Tunisia's position is complex and multifaceted, with a variety of interconnected concerns at play. The assumption of entire control by President Kais Saied in 2019 is a huge setback for Tunisian democracy, resuming the country on the route to authoritarian rule. Indeed, President Kais Saied seized complete authority and put the nation back on the path to authoritarian rule. Despite all of its successes, the Tunisian revolution was unable to eradicate the nation's pervasive corruption. However, Saied's government's crackdown on free speech and attacks

[169] Ryan, Y. (2011, October 5). Transforming Tunisia's internet agency. Science and Technology | Al Jazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2011/10/5/transforming-tunisias-internet-agency
[170] Will Tunisia's ATT Ring in a New Era of Mass Surveillance? (2013, November 27). Global Voices Advox. https://advox.globalvoices.org/2013/11/26/will-tunisias-att-ring-in-a-new-era-of-mass-surveillance/comment-page-2/

against its political opponents have had a chilling effect on Tunisian political life and would stifle most criticism during public consultations. Another concern is the issue of privacy and confidentiality, which could limit the willingness of Tunisians to participate in online consultations, particularly if they fear retaliation for expressing dissenting views or criticizing the government. Moreover, President Saied's government's crackdown on free speech and attacks against its political opponents have had a chilling effect on Tunisian political life. This could lead to a situation where public consultations are conducted in an environment of fear and intimidation, with critics of the government hesitant to speak out for fear of reprisals.[171]

3.6 Online activists cases from 2011 until 2023

Over the past 20 years, the Internet environment has seen significant upheaval. The digitalization of mass media material and its dissemination through websites and computer networks is a significant part of this transformation. Simultaneously, we observe a significant shift in user behavior: instead of remaining largely passive consumers of mass media content, users now actively contribute to the creation of ratings, suggestions, and self-generated content through a wide range of different functions like comments, annotations, wikis, blogs, microblogs, and social media platforms (Thurman 2008).[172] There are repercussions with regard to media convergence, participatory culture, and communal intelligence, as Jenkins has indicated (Jenkins 2006).[173] Online activism in Tunisia has a long history that dates back to the country's early use of the Internet. The political shift in Tunisia, which started in 2010 with the ouster of previous President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, has been greatly aided by online activity. Online activism in Tunisia has remained a powerful force ever since, with social media sites like Facebook and Twitter being used to plan protests, disseminate news, and advance political agendas. Tunisian online activists have also encountered difficulties, such as harassment and censorship. The Tunisian government was well-known in 2010 for employing a number of methods to obstruct access to websites with anti-government or objectionable material. The

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[171] DAWN. كيف خان قيس سعيّد الثورة التونسية. (2022, January 14). ج, شري.
https://dawnmena.org/ar/%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%81-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D9%86-
%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%B3-%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%8A%D9%91%D8%AF-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A9-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A9/
[172] Hermida, A., & Thurman, N. (2008). A CLASH OF CULTURES. Journalism Practice, 2(3), 343–356. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512780802054538
[173] Baoill, A. Ó. (2008). Jenkins, H. (2006). Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide. New York: New York University Press. 336 pp. $29.95 (hardbound). Social Science Computer Review, 26(2), 252–254. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439307306088

government's increasing efforts to restrict online content, however, have raised concerns in recent years.

Also, the government has monitored online activities using surveillance technology, raising issues with privacy and freedom of speech. online activists in Tunisia have additionally experienced intimidation and persecution from non-state actors, such as extremist organizations, in addition to government suppression. The Arab Spring would not have begun without Tunisia if not for the unexpected events that occurred in this little country. The Tunisian Jasmine Revolution sent shockwaves throughout the MENA region, starting off what has become known as the Arab Spring.[174]

For many years, it was prominently included on Reporters Without Borders' Enemies of the Internet list,[175], and the Tunisian government was in most cases the first country in the area to begin adopting communications monitoring, censorship, and control technologies. These modifications to the media environment have the potential to have an impact on democratic decision-making and public policy during Arab spring 2011. Social media sites and the news media significantly and crucially contributed to authoritarian governments during the "Arab Spring." the national media landscape in pre-revolutionary Tunisia involved a stringent system of political control. A wave of pro-democracy upheavals known as the Arab Spring impacted Tunisia. The phrase originated when the unrest tunisia began in the spring of 2011. When Mr. Bouazizi suffered enormous embarrassment in December 2010, the Arab Spring got underway. Indeed, a 26-year-old street vendor from Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, Mohamed Bouazizi, commits himself by lighting himself on fire.a video showing Mr. Bouazizi's mother directing a nonviolent protest outside the local government building was posted by his cousin. As a result, satellite television like Al-Jazeera and social media sites like Facebook and Twitter were crucial to the Arab Spring in general as well as the Tunisian revolution in particular.[176]

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[174] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2011b, February 23). Jasmine Revolution | Tunisia, Arab Spring, Timeline, & Results. Encyclopedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/event/Jasmine-Revolution

[175] RSF report: 15 enemies of the internet - European Digital Rights (EDRi). (2005, November 21). European Digital Rights (EDRi). https://edri.org/our-work/edrigramnumber3-23rsf/

[176] Campbell, H. A., & Hawk, D. (2012). Al Jazeera's Framing of Social Media During the Arab Spring. Cyber Orient, 6(1), 34–51. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.cyo2.20120601.0003

A teenage girl from Tunisia named Lina Ben Mhenni blogs under the name A Tunisian Girl. Lina Mhenni[177] was one of the few bloggers who used her real name rather than a pseudonym to safeguard her identity while Ben Ali was in power. To hold the government accountable for its acts, she visited hospitals, spoke with the relatives of the victims, and shared images and videos of the injured protesting around Tunisia. Under the Ben Ali government, her blog was muted, she was frequently watched by authorities, and her employment was scrutinized. Internet activists in Tunisia have additionally endured intimidation and prosecution from non-state actors, such as extremist organizations, in addition to government censorship. For instance, the murder of well-known opposition figure Chokri Belaid[178] in 2013 was purportedly motivated by his Internet activities and criticism of the ruling party.

In 2015, Online activists started a movement to defend free expression and human rights in Tunisia. Nevertheless, a group of conservative Islamists opposed to the activists' viewpoints violently threatened and harassed the campaign. On social media, several activists were singled out and abused, and some even got death threats. To safeguard the country's freedom of speech and human rights, a group of Tunisian activists created the online movement "Manich Msamah"[179] (which translates to "I Won't Forgive") in 2016. The campaign was sparked by several instances of online repression and censorship, such as the incarceration of a young man who was charged with blasphemy for sharing a sarcastic Facebook post. The movement gained pace online as activists planned protests, disseminated news, and raised awareness of Tunisia's human rights issues through social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. One of the main goals of the campaign was to resist what activists saw as a rise in censorship and repression in the country, particularly about Internet information. For criticizing the Tunisian military on Facebook, Yassine Ayari.[180] a blogger, was detained and accused of "defaming the army" in 2017. For his participation in the protests in 2010 and 2011 that resulted in the toppling of former President Ben Ali, Ayari had already served time

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[177] BBC News. (2020a, February 1). Lina Ben Mhenni: The woman who blogged about Tunisia's revolution. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-51310557

[178] Ryan, Y. (2013, September 12). Who killed Tunisia's Chokri Belaid? Features | Al Jazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2013/9/12/who-killed-tunisias-chokri-belaid

[179] J. (n.d.). Manich Msamah and the Face of Continued Protest in Tunisia. Jadaliyya -. https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/34515

[180] Brown, E. C. (2021, September 28). Tunisian MP and influential blogger Yassine Ayari imprisoned. The National. https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/2021/07/30/tunisian-mp-and-influential-blogger-yassine-ayari-arrested/

in prison. Bloggers and social media activists in Tunisia are being persecuted, accused of crimes, and even imprisoned in some circumstances, according to a statement released today by Human Rights Watch.[181]

Since 2017, at least nine bloggers have been charged with crimes for posting comments on social media platforms that were critical of or allegedly insulted high-ranking government officials. These incidents highlight the continued difficulties online activists in Tunisia confront, such as censorship, prosecution, and harassment. Many Tunisian activists nevertheless use social media and Internet platforms to spread the word about crucial problems involving human rights, democracy, and civil liberties despite these obstacles.[182]

3.7 Internet censorship tools

Since the Internet started to be utilized as a new medium of communication inside and around Tunisia, the Tunisian government has also implemented systematic Internet filtering. Internet users in Tunisia were unable to access websites that included material critical of the government, including international news websites. Tunisia has a history of widespread Internet censorship and control dating back to 1996 when the public first had access to the web. When Tunisians attempted to visit these websites, they were greeted with a generic error message that said either the website was not there, the network was down, or both. Information creation, delivery, sharing, and archiving on the Internet are governed by the Press Code and a ministerial decree from 1997.[183]

As of 2000, the Ben Ali regime faced a fresh challenge from online platforms; it became the routine practice to systematically block activists homepages, Facebook, and YouTube. The websites of several significant news organizations, including Al-Nahdah Net, Al-Kalima, Tunis News, and Al-Bawwaba, were blocked in Tunisia for more than 10 years. A growing number of bloggers and Facebook users have been charged with crimes for posting their opinions in peace online. They have been the subject of criminal investigations, prosecutions, and occasionally sentences for offenses including defamation, derision of public figures, and "harming" people over telecommunications networks.on November 30, 2007Government censored content authored by and about opposition activists by blocking major video-sharing

[181] Tunisia: Bloggers Held for Criticizing Officials. (2020b, October 28). Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/25/tunisia-bloggers-held-criticizing-officials
[182] Tunisia: Bloggers Held for Criticizing Officials. (2020c, October 28). Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/25/tunisia-bloggers-held-criticizing-officials
[183] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (n.d.-b). Refworld | Human Rights Watch World Report 1997 - Tunisia. Refworld. https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a8ac4.html

websites, including YouTube, Amnesty International has looked at the instances of 40 people who have faced similar indictments, including bloggers, political activists, owners of popular Facebook pages, and human rights defenders.[184]

Decades before the Arab Spring, Tunisia had a well-established infrastructure for Internet filtering that was a vital component of online communications. The whole Tunisian Internet was designed to promote meddling and the violation of human rights. To guarantee the government had complete control over Internet communications, the infrastructure of the Internet was centralized, and the participation of the private sector was severely constrained. Separate from censorship, communications surveillance was pervasive in both fixed-line and mobile telecommunications, on the Internet, and in both mobile and fixed-line networks. The government needed the assistance of Tunisie Telecom, as well as independent ISPs and mobile telecommunications providers, to monitor its population. Comparable to Internet censorship, communications monitoring increased over time as new oppressive technologies were added. as communications networks continued to get increasingly oppressive technological layers. The extent of censorship, monitoring, and Internet control gradually expanded throughout the Tunisian revolution. Ben Ali pledged to end all restrictions and enact a free press as part of his final, desperate concessions before fleeing the nation a few days later. This decision was put into effect within a short period, allowing Tunisians to immediately access a large number of previously inaccessible websites. However, Tunisia still has a significant amount of censorship and monitoring infrastructure in place.

In recent decades, a wide range of censorship, monitoring, surveillance, and control techniques have been discovered. These include Tunisia's broad suppression of political websites and Tunisia's filtering, alteration, and surveillance of email traffic. Although they have encountered many difficulties doing so due to the exponential growth in phone and Internet traffic over the past 10 years. The money spent on censorship, monitoring, and control tools by the Tunisia government is unbelievable. Before 2010, it was crucial to keep in mind that Tunisia's communications networks were already oppressive settings that were only becoming more. Tunisia was getting ready to implement a new censorship and monitoring system designed exclusively for social media platforms even before the Jasmine movement. the Egyptian system of Internet restriction is comparable to the one in Tunisia.

[184] Amnesty International. (2022a, August 8). Tunisia: Freedom of expression at risk as prosecutions rise. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/11/tunisia-freedom-of-expression-at-risk-as-prosecutions-rise-2/

During the enormous protests that took place in Tunisia in 2010 and 2011, which included hacking websites and vandalizing blogs of revolutionaries, the censorship of the Internet and telecommunications intensified. There have been instances where technical techniques have been utilized to obtain usernames and passwords, but there have also been several instances where security agents have reportedly forced inmates to provide their login information.[185] Technology was critical in the fall of Tunisia's authoritarian government. Widespread censorship was practiced by the Tunisian Internet Agency (ATI), which blocked particular websites using filtering software. The government was unable to selectively censor Facebook, though. Its only choice was to completely block Facebook and other social media programmes. As a result, activists had access to social media like Facebook, Twitter, and others for communication and coordination. Despite Internet censorship by the government, Tunisian activists used ICT to disseminate material critical of the government, rally the populace, and plan protests. Online information, including political opposition Web sites, human rights organizations, and websites that offer access to privacy-enhancing technologies, is aggressively targeted and blocked in Tunisia, according to ONI research. According to ONI research, Secure Computing, a US-based corporation, provided the filtering software known as Smart Filter, which is the foundation of Tunisia's government Internet agency, ATI's filtering system.[186]

In Tunisia, Internet filtering and censorship have been contentious topics in recent years. Some contend that these actions are required to safeguard the nation's security and values, while others view them as a breach of free expression and a violation of human rights. The Tunisian government has employed a number of techniques to regulate the flow of information online, including website blocking, social media monitoring, and the detention of people for their online activity. International organizations and human rights organizations have condemned these policies, saying they are frequently used to crush political opposition and silence criticism. Ultimately, the situation in Tunisia continues to be complicated and disputed. It is intended that through maintaining a discussion and active participation, Tunisia's Internet may get closer to being more open and free.

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[185] State of Surveillance Tunisia. (n.d.-c). Privacy International. https://privacyinternational.org/state-privacy/1012/state-surveillance-tunisia
[186] Internet Filtering in Tunisia in 2005 | OpenNet Initiative. (n.d.-c). https://opennet.net/blog/2005/11/internet-filtering-tunisia-2005

Chapter IV: Empirical Investigation: Data Collection

4.1 Data collection

In recent years, the use of the Internet as a tool for political mobilization and activism has become an important issue of discussion, particularly in the context of authoritarian governments. As more people acquire access to the Internet and social media, there is increased interest in these platforms' ability to enable political change and challenge authoritarian governments.

By examining the actions and reactions of activists and authoritarian regimes in relation to the Internet and focusing on effective methods and tactics, this chapter aims to provide a better understanding of the complicated link between the Internet and authoritarianism in Egypt and Tunisia, as well as the possibilities of the Internet as a tool for political change in repressive contexts. as well as the obstacles and threats by researching the experiences of activists who have utilized the Internet to resist authoritarian regimes. This chapter seeks to provide light on how activists have used the Internet to challenge authoritarian governments (the action), as well as how these regimes have responded to these challenges (the reaction) using the action and reaction technique.

A total of (4) activists two females and two males have been interviewed. Four individuals were chosen for these interviews based on factors such as age (25 - 35), gender (male and female), and political background, so as to guarantee diversity in the group.The interviews were performed in a semi-structured approach, allowing for some freedom in the dialogue while ensuring that the key points were covered. The final question in every section was an open-ended question that allowed interviewers to speak freely and give any extra information about their experience. This method allowed for a more comprehensive knowledge of the interviewee's viewpoints and experiences by giving them the opportunity to express their ideas.Each interview lasted around half an hour and was performed both online using video zoom meetings and offline. I investigate how activists used social media to communicate information and organize protests, how they felt unsafe on the Internet, and how they avoided surveillance by using encrypted messaging apps. I explain the problems and limits that activists may face when confronting authoritarian governments using the Internet, as well as the Internet's potential to help political change. so it covers how activists in Egypt and Tunisia deal with censorship and Internet limitations, as well as the techniques they've used to overcome these challenges. then look at how changes in mobilization and communication have affected the use of the Internet as a tool for political participation since 2011/12 during the Arab spring. In addition, a comparative analysis of gender dynamics in Egypt and Tunisia examines the similarities and differences in how men and women use the Internet as a tool for political mobilization and action, and the challenges and opportunities they confront.

This chapter offers an in-depth and insightful examination of the role of the Internet in political activism and resistance to authoritarianism, emphasizing the Internet's potential as a tool for political change as well as the challenges and obstacles that activists face in repressive situations.

4.2 Activism facing censorship

According to the interviewee activists in Egypt and Tunisia have described feeling insecure and afraid while using the Internet and social media, particularly while engaged in political activism or expressing opposing viewpoints. They are aware that their Internet activities are being monitored by authorities and that they may face consequences for their actions, such as arrest, jail, or harassment (reaction). To protect their communication and escape detection, many activists have turned to encrypted messaging apps and other privacy-enhancing techniques. The interviewee talks about the use of encryption to protect sensitive information and the atmosphere of fear surrounding social media users in Egypt and Tunisia.

In a personal interview on February 27, 2023, one Tunisian activist said, "yes when I communicate sensitive, private, or secret information over the Internet, encryption is a crucial privacy tool."
In a personal interview on February 24, 2023, one Egyptian activist said," I have to be more private and I have more protection on the Internet, I want to be free like the European countries or something somewhere else."
Both instances highlight the value of using encryption as a privacy method to safeguard confidential, private, or sensitive information. This is most likely because both governments have a history of conducting extensive monitoring and surveillance, which makes encryption a vital tool for activists to use to communicate privately while shielding themselves from official monitoring.
According to the interviewees, there is an atmosphere of fear during using the Internet and social media in both Egypt and Tunisia. Activists in both nations report feeling unsafe and afraid while engaging in political activism or expressing opposing ideas on the Internet because they are aware that their Internet activities are being monitored by authorities and that they may suffer consequences for their actions. Also, both cases from Tunisia and Egypt stated that they were more exposed to Internet dangers and lacked trust in their capacity to stay safe. Other terms that emerged from the investigation relating to fear, feeling unsafe, and privacy protection include Fear of online dangers: Due to the proliferation of online risks including hacking, identity theft, and fraud, female participants were more concerned about their safety online.
Activists in Tunisia and Egypt's experiences reflect using the Internet as a tool for political action reveals some comparable features and variations. Both activists acknowledge the risks of accessing the Internet in the context of their separate totalitarian regimes and stress the significance of privacy and safety. The Tunisian activist, on the other hand, highlights the necessity of encryption as a privacy tool, whilst the Egyptian activist expresses a broader concern for total Internet freedom and privacy, as well as a desire for a better political and social climate beyond their current system. These interviews show the varied and nuanced experiences of activists who utilize the Internet for political objectives, as well as the continual problems and obstacles they encounter in oppressive environments.

4.3 Transformations in Mobilization and Communication: Post-2011/12 Period

The interviewees from Egypt and Tunisia also mentioned how important social media was in their nations during and after the Arab Spring. They stated that social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube enabled people to contact one another, share tales, and coordinate political activities and protests. In the face of government censorship and restrictions on their right to free expression, social media enabled demonstrators to engage and exchange information rapidly and effectively, making mobilization and coordination of political activity simpler.

According to the interviewees, social media continue to play an important role in their nations, influencing how people engage with one another, obtain information, and participate in political and social movements. They did, however, emphasize the fear and discomfort that exists among social media users, particularly those who engage in political activities or express opposing ideas. They are aware that their Internet activities are being monitored by authorities and that they may face penalties such as arrest, incarceration, or harassment as a result of their acts.

According to the interviews both cases freedom to express themselves online during the Arab Spring. But in recent years, the issue has gotten more complicated, making it riskier for individuals to express themselves freely online because online threats and difficulties have increased. the environment for Internet users in Tunisia has gotten riskier and more challenging.

Both the Tunisian and Egyptian activists are reflecting on the impact of the Arab Spring, a series of pro-democracy uprisings in 2010 and 2011.

In a personal interview on February 25, 2023, one Tunisian activist said, "And we're really so proud because as they see, like that time, we were like the only Arab country, we have really where we can speak, we have a real democracy, not fake one because the all the other Arab countries say they have democracy, but it was really fake."

In a personal interview on February 23, 2023, one Egyptian activist said, " I think Arab spring was not failure, it was an important event."

The Tunisian activist expresses pride for his country for achieving a real democracy in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, and for being a rare example of genuine democracy in the Arab world. Meanwhile, the Egyptian activist sees the Arab Spring as an important event, suggesting that even if it did not lead to immediate or complete political change, it still had a significant impact on the region and its people.

The similarity between the two statements is that they both recognize the Arab Spring as a significant moment in their respective countries' historic countries, and as an event that had an impact on the political landscape of the region. While the Tunisian activist highlights the successes of their country's transition to democracy, the Egyptian activist acknowledges that the Arab Spring was not a complete success, but still, an important moment of change.

4.4 Gender Dynamics in Egypt and Tunisia: A Comparative Analysis

According to the interview of both female cases in Egypt and Tunisia, women experience different types of discrimination and abuse, both online and offline, in addition to legal limitations. Women who are engaged online may experience cyberbullying, stalking, and online harassment, which can limit their capacity to express themselves freely. Authorities frequently utilize the accusations of "inciting debauchery, immorality and stirring up instincts" to pursue women who express themselves in ways that are judged indecent or insulting to public morals online. Article 178 of the Egyptian Criminal Code, which criminalizes actions perceived to represent a threat to public morals, particularly those that encourage or instigate immorality or debauchery, is the basis for these accusations.

According to the findings, activists in both countries, particularly women, suffered considerable limitations and surveillance when it came to political expression and activism. The data provides insight into the region's sociopolitical context as well as the barriers individuals experienced in exercising their right to free expression and privacy.
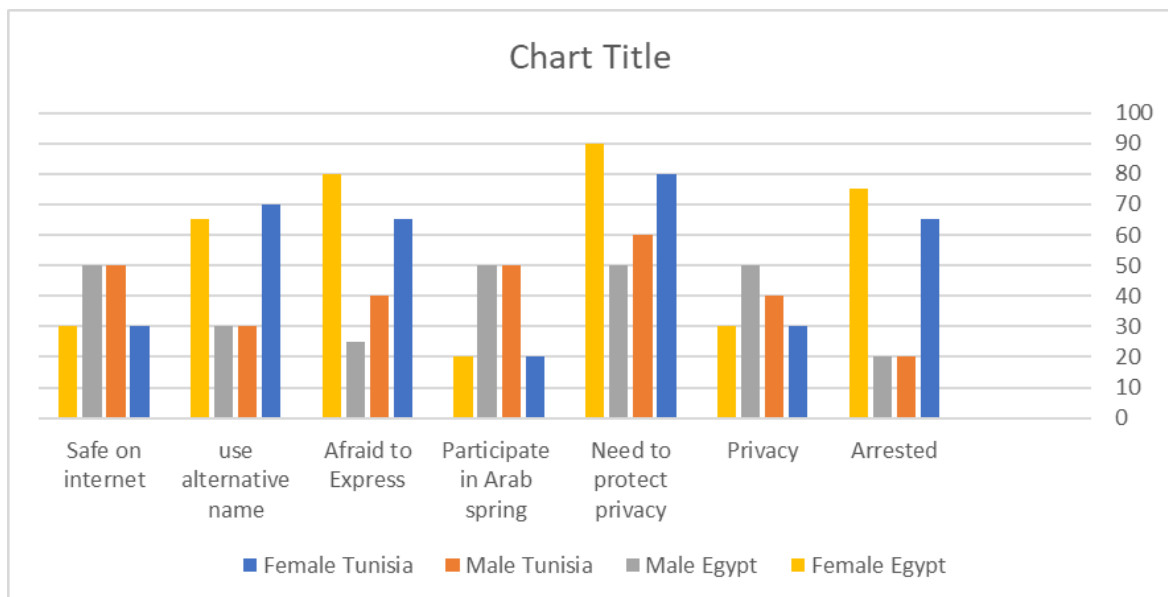

Chart 1 Egypt and Tunisia "The chart shows the percentage of male and female interviewees from Egypt and Tunisia who expressed certain experiences related to key topics like censorship and privacy. The data was derived from interviews and analyzed through coding and categorization to identify key themes and patterns."

This chart representation of the data collected from interviews with two males and two females from Egypt and Tunisia. After the interviews were conducted, the responses from each interviewee have been transcribed by focusing on key themes and patterns that emerged from the responses, categorizing the responses into different codes, based on their responses. These codes may have included things like "arrested," "censorship," "privacy," and "participation in the Arab Spring." Percentages represent the proportion of interviewees who expressed a particular experience related to key topics like feeling safe on the Internet. Here's a breakdown of what each variable could mean:

1. Arrested: The likelihood or regularity with which people were arrested or jailed for exercising their right to free expression or activity.
2. Privacy refers to how much control individuals have over their personal information and online activities, as well as the extent of government surveillance or monitoring. The amount to which individuals felt compelled to take steps to safeguard their privacy, such as utilizing encryption or anonymous online identities.
3. Take part in the Arab Spring: The extent to which individuals participated in 2011 Arab Spring protests and political activities.
4. Fear of Expressing: The extent to which people were fearful or unwilling to express their political opinions or join in the activity.
5. The extent to which people adopted alternative or pseudonymous names online to preserve their privacy or avoid identification.
6. Censorship: The extent to which the government restricts or controls information access or suppresses opposition.

Male and female cases differ in both Tunisia and Egypt. Here's a breakdown of those distinctions: According to the data women in Tunisia received higher marks for being arrested (65), needing to safeguard privacy (80), being frightened to express themselves (65), and censorship (65). This means that women in Tunisia may suffer additional constraints and surveillance when it comes to political expression and activism, and may be more afraid to share their opinions or take steps to protect their privacy. Despite men in Tunisia receiving greater marks for participating in the Arab Spring (50). This shows that men in Tunisia were more active in the 2011 uprisings and have more freedom. According to the data, women from Egypt scored higher in the categories of need to safeguard privacy (90) than the man instance in Egypt, who scored lower in all categories. This shows that female Egyptians had higher hurdles in terms of preserving their personal information.

One possible explanation for this gap could be Egypt's cultural and social norms. Women in Egypt may experience more surveillance and control over their personal life, which may include online activity and personal information. It's also clear that the Egyptian female instance had a reasonably high censoring score (80), implying that she may have encountered additional constraints on her freedom of expression and access to information. Overall, the data show that women in Egypt may suffer more difficulties in exercising their right to privacy and freedom of expression.

4.5 Conclusion

In conclusion there is a lot of evidence of similarities between Egypt and Tunisia. Human rights abuses, such as limitations on the freedom of expression and association, have a history in both nations. However recent popular uprisings and calls for political change and social fairness have also led to significant political and social transformations. Both countries participated in the Arab Spring uprisings, which got underway in 2010–2011.

Demands for political reform, social justice, and an end to authoritarian rule served as the catalyst for the demonstrations. The mobilization and planning of these protests were greatly aided by the use of social media and the Internet with some security and privacy concerns such as censorship and cyber threats. Both countries have a history of utilizing online censorship to repress dissent and opposition, resulting in serious abuses of free expression and information access. This has resulted in a lack of confidence between residents and the government, impeding progress toward a more democratic and inclusive society.

The Internet has opened new pathways for political activism in both Egypt and Tunisia, based on the analysis of various cases and interviews with activists, by focusing on activist actions and authoritarian state reactions to the Internet. Activists have used social media platforms to plan protests and communicate information, allowing for increased citizen participation and mobilization. Authoritarian regimes have increasingly used online censorship and surveillance to suppress dissent and curtail freedom of expression in response. Despite these obstacles, activists in both nations have continued to utilize the Internet to campaign for political change and challenge authoritarianism.

To solve these difficulties, rules, and procedures that promote and defend Internet freedom while balancing security concerns must be developed. To design policies that protect human rights, including digital rights, decision-makers, civil society groups, and other stakeholders must work together. Furthermore, strengthening Internet freedom in Egypt and Tunisia necessitates expanding access to information, fostering digital literacy, and investing in digital infrastructure to ensure that all citizens have equitable access to the Internet. This is especially significant in rural and underserved areas where Internet access may be limited.

Internet rights must be protected in order to promote social and economic development in Egypt and Tunisia. Internet rights can help create a more inclusive and affluent society by allowing citizens to engage in political and social life, access information, and express themselves freely. Finally, defending Internet rights in Egypt and Tunisia is critical for advancing democracy, human rights, and social justice. Decision-makers, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders must work together to design policies that combine security needs with human rights and digital freedoms. To ensure that all residents have equitable access to the Internet, it will be necessary to improve access to information, invest in digital infrastructure, and promote digital literacy. Furthermore, international organizations and the global community must support and help Egypt and Tunisia in their efforts to strengthen Internet freedom and preserve human rights. It is also critical to hold governments accountable for any violations of human rights and to assist civil society organizations and

independent media in their efforts to promote openness, accountability, and good governance. We can help Egypt and Tunisia continue on their path to greater social and economic development, political change, and human rights protection by working together to safeguard Internet rights and promote democratic ideals.

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