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<http://www.rsf.org/iran-social-network-expert-is-12-04-2012,42300.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Iran

"Clean Internet"

Social network expert is collateral victim of National Internet project

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Reporters Without Borders calls for the immediate and unconditional release of **Mohammad Solimaninya**, an Internet and social network expert who has been detained for the past three months and who, according to the information we have obtained, is being pressured to work with the government on the creation of a "National Internet."

Solimaninya ran [u24](#), a social networking website for Iranian professionals that had tens of thousands of users. He also created and hosted the websites of many Iranian civil society organizations, NGOs and intellectuals.

He was arrested on 10 January after being summoned before a revolutionary tribunal in Karaj, a town 20 km north of Tehran. Plainclothes intelligence ministry officials searched his home the same day, confiscating his computer, hard disks and CDs. He has been held for the past month in Section 209 of Tehran's Evin prison, where he is reportedly under intense pressure to work on the National Internet project.

Prior to his arrest, he was repeatedly summoned and interrogated by intelligence officials, who tried to make him surrender control of the websites he managed. According to his family, he is now on a second hunger strike in protest against the way he is being held. No charges have so far been brought against him and judicial officials forced him to sign a statement that he would be unable to meet bail conditions.

Iran recently became [the world's second biggest prison for netizens](#), after China and ahead of Vietnam. A total of 19 bloggers and cyber-dissidents are currently detained in Iran, and four of its netizens have been [sentenced to death](#).

The Iranian authorities meanwhile yesterday denied [media reports](#) that access to the international Internet will be permanently unplugged in May as part of the National Internet's creation, which the government has mentioned on several occasions in the past.

In a statement, the ministry of information technology likened the reports to an April Fool's joke and said they were being used by the media and "colonialist foreign circles" to discredit Iran.

As Reporters Without Borders said in the [Iran](#) chapter of its "Enemies of the Internet" report on 12 March, "Iranians who cannot, or dare not, circumvent the censors' filtering system are doomed to use a regime-approved version of the Web, meaning one 'cleansed' of any political, social and religious criticism. The national Internet has been a reality for years now, so the announcement of its launching primarily stems from political and nationalist motives."

The report also wondered how this "clean Internet" would be set up. "Is the regime moving toward

a two-speed Internet with access to the World Wide Web for the government, religious leaders, Revolutionary Guards and big companies on one side, and the vast majority of the population limited to a censored Intranet on the other? If such is the case, the authorities would be guilty of grave discrimination against its own people – a genuine digital apartheid.”
