

# Turkish president Gul says Twitter ban to be lifted 'soon'

March 23 2014

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People hold placards as they protest against Turkey's Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan after the government blocked access to Twitter in Ankara, on March 21, 2014

Turkey's president said Sunday the government would soon lift its ban on Twitter, which has sparked criticism at home and abroad.

"It is not legally possible to shut down the Internet and such platforms (as Twitter)," Abdullah Gul told reporters in Ankara before leaving for

an official visit to the Netherlands.

"I believe this problem will be over soon," he said.

"This is of course an unpleasant situation for such a developed country as Turkey, which has weight in the region and which is negotiating with the European Union. Therefore, it will be overcome soon."

The president also confirmed that the US-based [social media](#) giant had hired a lawyer in Turkey for negotiations with the authorities.

"Twitter did not have any representative in Turkey. There should be good communication channels with such... giants. They now have a lawyer here acting for them," he said.

Gul, a frequent social media user, took to Twitter on Friday to denounce the government's ban hours after the network went dark, becoming the highest-level leader in the country to circumvent the block, along with some ministers.

The Twitter ban was instituted late Thursday after Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened to "wipe out" the social network.



Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan addresses members of his ruling AK Party (AKP) during a parliamentary session in Ankara, on February 25, 2014

Gul, who hails from Erdogan's Islamic-rooted Justice and Development Party (AKP), has emerged as a more conciliatory leader than the Turkish premier, who has been in power since 2003.

But he also drew criticism last month for signing a controversial AKP-sponsored law to tighten government control over the Internet.

Government officials said authorities blocked access to Twitter because the service ignored "hundreds of court orders" to remove some links deemed illegal.

Critics however claim it was an attempt to hush up corruption allegations

ensnaring Erdogan and his allies ahead of key local elections on March 30.



Turkey's President Abdullah Gul gives a statement during a state visit to the Hungarian presidential palace in Budapest, on February 17, 2014

Audio tapes allegedly depicting Erdogan involved in massive corruption have flooded social media networks including Twitter almost daily.

Erdogan has dismissed most of the audio recordings as a "vile montage" put together by his political rivals.

The president said Sunday that his telephones might also have been tapped, but that he had "nothing to worry about".

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