

Warnings removed from Instagram accounts in North Korea

June 25 2015, by Eric Talmadge

Instagram appears to be back to normal in North Korea after a week of warnings on user accounts saying the popular photo-sharing app had been blacklisted for harmful content.

Virtually no North Koreans have [free access](#) to the Internet or any kind of social media. But foreigners have been able since 2013 to use the Internet and read email with 3G on their mobile devices within the country on the local carrier, Koryolink. That opened the door for them to post freely to sites like Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

Instagram access was disrupted for about a week, with warnings appearing in English and Korean that it had been put on a blacklisted for harmful content. The warnings disappeared late Wednesday and Instagram was functioning normally Thursday.

Photos from the North on Instagram posted by foreigners—though there are only a handful of regular users—have provided a rare window on daily life in North Korea. But they have also posed a quandary for North Korean officials who are highly concerned about the flow of information and images in and out of the country. Twitter, Facebook and other [social media](#) were not affected by the warnings.

There had been no notice from the government of a shift in policy or from the mobile [phone service provider](#) to its customers that Instagram had been formally blacklisted. Officials with Instagram had no comment on the warnings when contacted by The Associated Press earlier this

week.

Without any official confirmation, it remains unclear where the warnings originated, how widespread they were, whether it was a hack of some sort or if it had any connection to a fire on June 11 at a luxury hotel often used by tourists and foreign visitors in Pyongyang.

Photos of the fire leaked out of the country and were carried widely by media around the world, though it was not reported by the North's state-run media.

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