

Bangladesh lifts ban on all social media (Update)

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Bangladesh ordered Facebook, WhatsApp and Viber blocked in November after two opposition leaders lost their appeals against the death penalty for war crimes committed during the 1971 independence conflict

Bangladesh has lifted a ban on all social media blocked over security concerns, officials confirmed Monday, as authorities have struggled to quell militant violence and opposition unrest.

The removal of the embargo came just hours after the government had implemented a new block on Skype and Twitter, adding them to the list of banded messaging apps, including WhatsApp and Viber.

"But all social communications media are now being unblocked following a government order," Telecoms Minister Tarana Halim told reporters.

Authorities lifted a 22-day ban on Facebook last Thursday, following a meeting between the government and Facebook officials.

The minister thanked Internet users for "keeping patience" during the current ban after hundreds of youths protested on the streets earlier this month, branding the move an attack on freedom of expression.

The government ordered Facebook, WhatsApp and Viber blocked in November after two opposition leaders lost their appeals against the death penalty for war crimes committed during the 1971 independence conflict.

The pair, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury and Ali Ahsan Mujahid, were hanged days later, hiking fears of opposition unrest in a country already reeling from deadly attacks by suspected Islamist militants.

Similar convictions in 2013 triggered the country's deadliest violence since independence, with some 500 people killed—mainly in clashes between opposition activists and police.

Bangladesh temporarily barred messaging services Tango and Viber in January after they became a popular way of mobilising large numbers of activists for anti-government protests.

Tensions are also high in Bangladesh after a series of recent attacks

blamed on Islamists, including the murders of two foreigners and the hacking to death of four atheist bloggers and a publisher.

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