

US on Turkey's Twitter ban: more tweets than before

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Protesters demonstrate against the ban on Twitter in Ankara on March 22, 2014

The United States on Monday noted there have been more Turkish tweets since the prime minister controversially banned the micro-blogging service than before.

Turkey's telecommunications authority blocked local access to the US social network Thursday under orders of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, after

opposition members used the social network to post telephone recordings implicating him in a major corruption scandal.

The move has attracted ire from the international community, with Washington on Friday denouncing the blow to "the right to free speech."

But State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf noted Monday that "there have been more tweets from Turkey since the government blocked (Twitter) than there were before."

"Which is an interesting, I think, signal to people who try to clamp down on freedom of expression: that it doesn't work, and isn't the right thing to do," she said.

"What the world saw was the number of people inside Turkey tweeting about what they thought about it being blocked there," Harf continued, as she also reiterated her government's condemnation of the ban.

The United States "said very clearly to the Turkish government that this is not acceptable and that we do not think they should be able to block their citizens' access to these kind of social media platforms," Harf said.

The spokeswoman noted that the US government was also "in contact with Twitter," but did not say if the United States would go to court to force Turkey to restore access to the service.

Washington and Ankara have a long-standing military alliance, including through NATO, and the two countries work together closely to support the opposition and the rebellion in Syria.

But relations have chilled in recent months as the United States has increasingly criticized the government's record on respecting civil liberties and human rights under Erdogan.

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