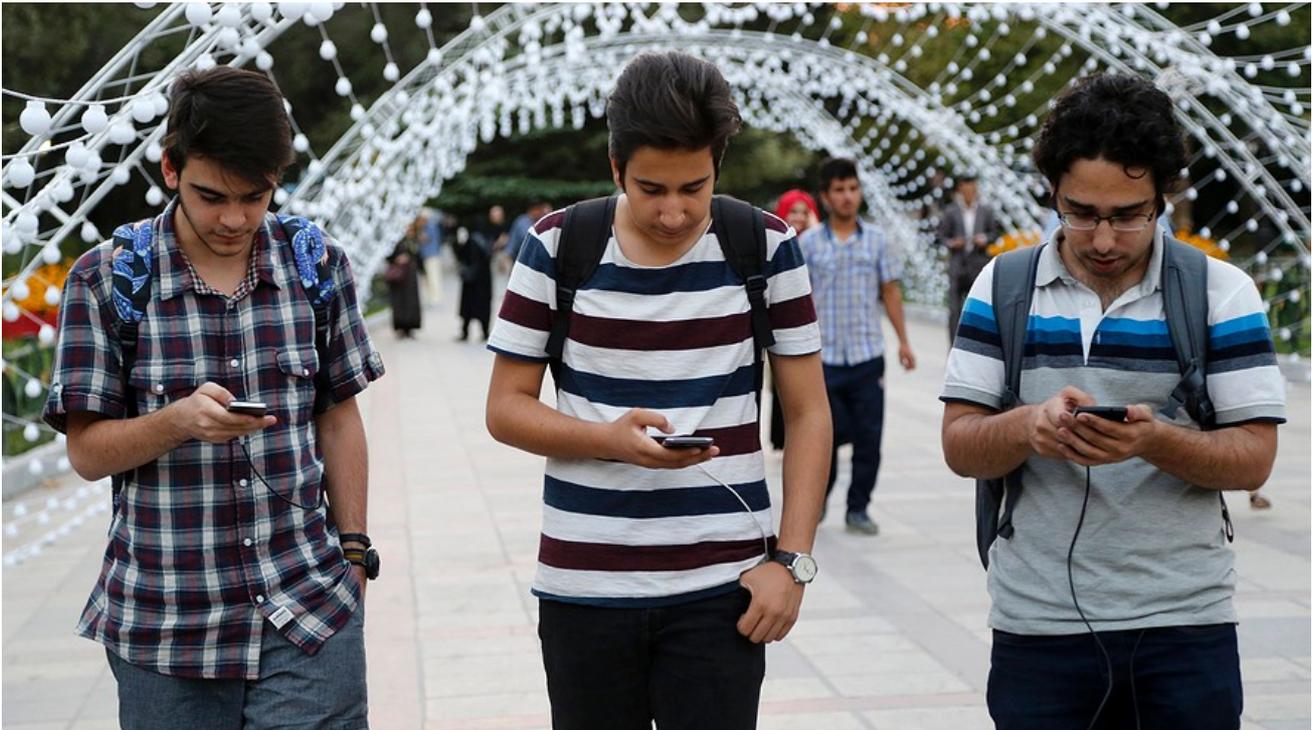


# Iran is the first country to ban smartphone game "Pokemon Go"

By Saeed Kamali Dehghan, The Guardian, adapted by Newsela staff on 08.12.16  
Word Count **517**



Iranians play on the "Pokemon Go" app in Tehran's Mellat Park on August 3, 2016. Iran was quick to ban the global gaming craze but, as with many of the Islamic republic's Internet controls, tech-savvy youngsters have carried on regardless. Photo: ATTA KENARE/AFP/Getty Images

Iran has become the first country to ban the mobile game "Pokemon Go." The country claimed it was concerned about the game's use of location-based virtual reality technology. The game uses a smartphone's GPS and camera to make Pokemon characters pop up on the player's screen.

Abolhasa Firouzabadi is the head of Iran's supreme council of virtual space. This government agency monitors the use of the Internet in the country. He told a news agency that any game that wants to operate in Iran needs to request permission first. According to him, "Pokemon Go" has not yet asked for permission.

## **Says Game Is A Threat To Iran**

A senior official, Abdolsamad Khorramabadi, was quoted last week as saying that the game was a threat to the country, and that Iran's intelligence agency approved of the ban.

Iran's tech-savvy young people quickly embraced the game. "Pokemon Go" has become a global phenomenon since its release last month.

Officials had previously hinted that they may allow the game in Iran. However, they said that the game must store its information inside the country and remove certain locations from the game. The makers of "Pokemon Go" have not responded to that request.

## **Anti-Filtering Software Used By Millions**

Internet filtering is common in Iran. Through this practice, the government blocks people's access to certain websites and content. However, it has not stopped millions of users from going on blocked apps and websites. Iranians use anti-filtering software to get around state restrictions. They have been able to bounce back quickly from unexpected blocks, often migrating in huge numbers from one platform to another when a block is introduced. The success of the messaging app Telegram, which is used by 1 in 4 Iranians, is proof of this.

Millions of Iranians are also on the social media websites Facebook and Twitter, even though both sites are blocked. In response, authorities are now using smart filtering. Instead of blocking an entire website or app, the government only blocks certain content. For example, the popular apps Instagram and Telegram can be used by Iranians, but some content on those apps has been filtered out.

Using anti-filtering software slows down the speed of a user's connection. It may not be possible to use the software when playing "Pokemon Go."

The decision on filtering does not rest solely in the government's hands. Other institutions in Iran, like the judiciary, act independently of President Hassan Rouhani and his administration. These institutions also have a say in deciding what should and shouldn't be censored in Iran.

## **Ban Not Being Taken Seriously**

Mana Neyestani is a prominent Iranian cartoonist. He reacted to the ban by drawing a cartoon depicting a "Pokemon Go" character fleeing from the Iranian morality police. These undercover officers patrol the streets of Iran to make sure that people are following strict codes of behavior.

One Iranian user joked on Twitter that it was difficult to focus while walking on the streets in Iran. "You have to both look around to hunt Pokemon and also watch not being hunted yourself by the morality police," the user said.

## Quiz

- 1 Select the sentence from the article that explains HOW Iran's government wants to control the content of "Pokemon Go."
- (A) A senior official, Abdolsamad Khorramabadi, was quoted last week as saying that the game was a threat to the country, and that Iran's intelligence agency approved of the ban.
  - (B) However, they said that the game must store its information inside the country and remove certain locations from the game.
  - (C) For example, the popular apps Instagram and Telegram can be used by Iranians, but some content on those apps has been filtered out.
  - (D) It may not be possible to use the software when playing "Pokemon Go."
- 2 Which section highlights the idea that government blocks on games and websites are NOT effective?
- (A) the introduction [paragraphs 1 and 2]
  - (B) "Says Game Is A Threat To Iran"
  - (C) "Anti-Filtering Software Used By Millions"
  - (D) "Ban Not Being Taken Seriously"
- 3 Fill in the blank.  
The author MAINLY explains the importance of the ban on "Pokemon Go" by\_\_\_\_\_.
- (A) listing the government's concerns about the dangers of the game
  - (B) explaining that it is one example of many apps or sites censored by the government
  - (C) including quotes from Iranian officials and citizens that show their thoughts on "Pokemon Go."
  - (D) explaining how anti-filtering software affects internet connection speeds
- 4 What is the MOST likely reason the author included the information in the section "Ban Not Being Taken Seriously"?
- (A) to show that the Iranian people do not respect the government's ban
  - (B) to show that the Iranian people are afraid of their government
  - (C) to show that the Iranian government is loved by the people
  - (D) to show that the Iranian government takes the ban very seriously

## Answer Key

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  - (B) However, they said that the game must store its information inside the country and remove certain locations from the game.**
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