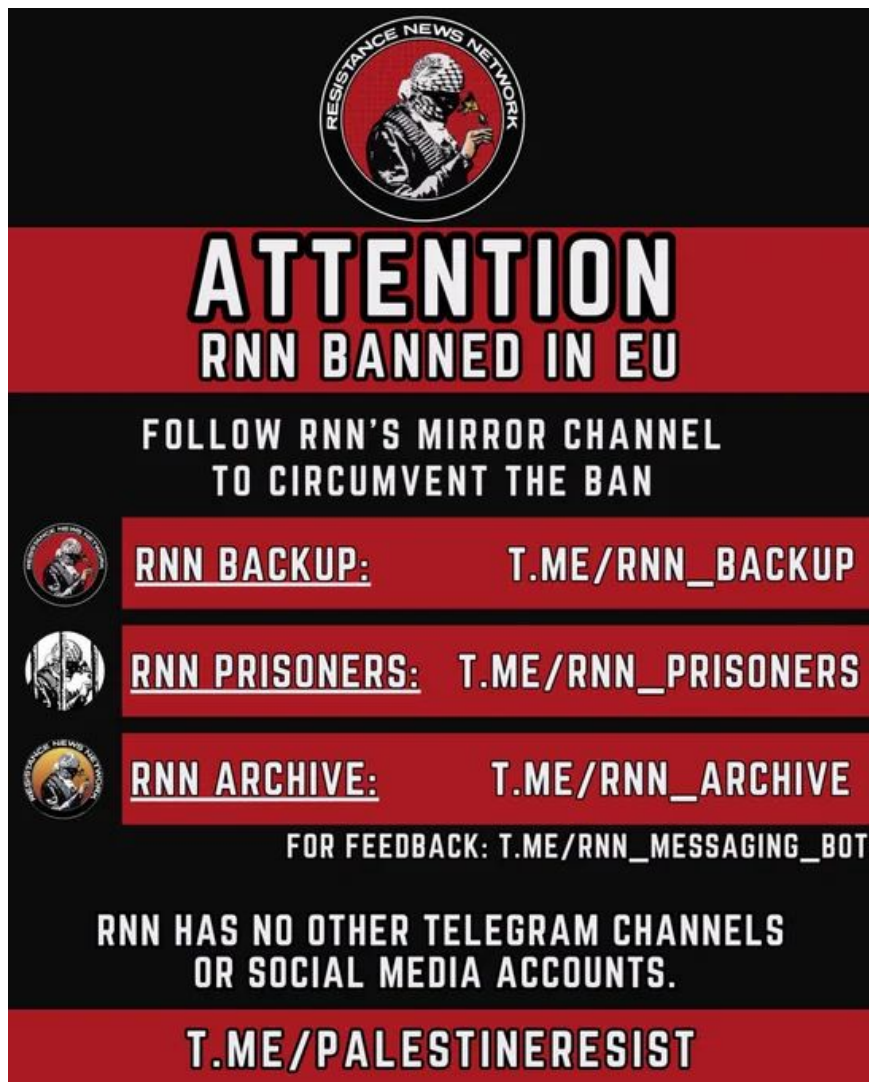




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# Information war: Telegram under fire for hosting pro-Palestinian content

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On Aug. 23, multiple pro-Palestinian Telegram channels were banned across Europe, including the “Palestine Archive” channel and the “Resistance News Network” (RNN). A week before the ban, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported that “Telegram has proved a massive challenge for Israel since the start of the war.”

Telegram has been a critical platform in the ongoing information war regarding the situation in Gaza. It allows supporters of the Palestinian cause to share information about Israeli actions easily and to highlight the resistance efforts of Hamas, Hezbollah, Yemen, and Iran.

These channels, not its encrypted communications, were the focus of the New York Times special report on Sept. 10 aimed at taking down Telegram. Telegram has a unique service called Channels, which is used to broadcast public messages to channel subscribers. Anyone can set up a Telegram channel, and anyone can subscribe to the channels.

Haaretz noted, “While many tech firms have streamlined mechanisms through which states can reach out to them” to censor content, “Telegram is considered the least cooperative of them all.”

### **Telegram founder arrested by French police**

On Aug. 24, the day after the Europe-wide ban on pro-Palestinian channels, Telegram founder Pavel Durov was arrested by French police. Following four days of intense interrogation, he was brought before a court and charged on multiple counts. Currently awaiting trial, Durov has been released on \$5.5 million bail, is required to report to the French police twice weekly, and is prohibited from leaving the country. Additionally, a warrant has been issued for his brother, the co-founder of Telegram.

French authorities have framed this action as a standard cybercrime operation to combat criminal activities. President Macron has reassured the public that the arrest is “not political.”

However, the French government and its allies appear to be seeking access to the extensive user data stored on Telegram, aiming to establish a legal precedent and send a strong message that any messaging platform refusing government intervention will be punished. It is an entirely “political” attack.

The charges against Durov mirror the targeting of Edward Snowden, Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning, and the Uhuru 3 as part of a broader campaign of political

persecution. Under the guise of anti-terrorism and crime prevention, the imperialist powers are using repressive tactics against those who dare to oppose their actions at home and abroad.

### **Snowden revealed tech giants work with U.S. intelligence**

In 2013, following Edward Snowden's revelations that tech giants had granted U.S. intelligence extensive backdoor access on platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook, Durov established Telegram as a secure messaging alternative.

A leaked 2021 [FBI document](#) confirms that Telegram is the most opaque messaging platform regarding what the agency can legally access.

As a result of its consistent refusal to disclose user information, Telegram has experienced intermittent bans in 31 countries since 2015. Telegram has emerged as a vital platform for organizing protests and revolutionary movements.

Its appeal lies in the fact that it has largely evaded external pressures. The platform has 950 million monthly active users, a significant increase from 500 million in 2021.

In the Ukraine war, Telegram serves as a crucial communication tool. The CIA-funded [Radio Free Europe](#) reports that almost everyone in Ukraine tunes into Telegram channels to get the news, particularly the reports from Russia.

Telegram has become the primary news source, offering real-time battlefield updates that don't always align with the Biden-Zelensky propaganda that fills Kiev-based media. The Ukrainian government tried to ban Telegram last year.

### **A note about encrypted communications**

Telegram's Channels are a free and open communications tool that is available to anyone. The messages sent through the channels are encrypted in transit between

your device and Telegram's servers and cannot be read by any form of unauthorized access to the transmission. But the messages are stored unencrypted on Telegram's servers, and theoretically the content can be accessed by Telegram, or if compelled, it can be shared with authorities.

Many reports on Telegram confuse the encryption during transmission with end-to-end encryption used in truly private conversations. In end-to-end encryption, the messages are encrypted in transmission and on the server and cannot be read by anyone.

Telegram's Secret Chats offers end-to-end encryption, but this can't be used on the channels.

WhatsApp uses end-to-end encryption for all personal messages, group chats, voice calls, and video calls. What WhatsApp calls a "channel" is not free and open, requiring a business account to use it fully. However, WhatsApp is owned by Facebook, which collects a lot of information from what people do on WhatsApp. WhatsApp is reportedly programmed to identify key words in sentences, like "birthday" or "travel," and send them to Facebook's servers to be processed for advertising before encrypting messages. Facebook and, therefore, WhatsApp also work with the police and government whenever requested, unlike Telegram.

Signal is a messaging app often promoted as an alternative to Telegram. All communications on Signal are end-to-end encrypted, including its channels. Not frequently mentioned, Signal collects some user metadata, including user phone number, device information, and connections made.

Signal was and remains very prominently used and promoted by dissidents and protesters backed by the U.S. government-funded National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Signal itself was developed by the Open Technology Fund, another U.S. government project. The app was initially used for U.S. intelligence

operations globally. WikiLeaks documents from 2017 revealed that the CIA has a backdoor to bypass Signal's encryption.

