

U.S. REPORT FLAGS CURBS ON INDIAN MEDIA

Relevant for: Security Related Matters | Topic: Role of Media and Social Networking Sites in internal security challenges

In its 2020 Human Rights Report, the U.S. State Department said the harassment and detention of journalists critical of the (Indian) government in their reporting and on social media, has continued, although the government generally respected the freedom of expression. It also said government's requests for user data from Internet companies had increased "dramatically."

The report, which is submitted each year to the U.S. Congress, is retrospective and contains a country-wise discussion of the state of human rights.

"The government generally respected this right, although there were several instances in which the government, or actors considered close to the government, allegedly pressured or harassed media outlets critical of the government, including through online trolling," the report says.

It also details cases against individual journalists and NGO activists, including Siddharth Varadarajan of *The Wire* (case by U.P. government) and Anirban Chattopadhyay of Anandabazar Patrika (summoning by Kolkata police).

The government made 49,382 user data requests in 2019 from Facebook, a 32% increase from 2018. Over the same period, Google requests increased by 69%, while Twitter requests saw a 68% increase.

In a section on the arbitrary deprivation of life, the report highlights the case of the Sattankulam (Tamil Nadu) custodial deaths of P. Jayaraj and his son J. Benicks, who were arrested for allegedly keeping their shop's shutters open past permitted hours during the pandemic. The report takes note of the April 2020 detention of pregnant Jamia Millia student Safoora Zargar, who was protesting the citizenship laws.

It also mentions the arrest of JNU student Umar Khalid, who like Ms. Zargar, was detained under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. On the protracted detention of politicians in J&K, the report notes that former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti, arrested under the Public Safety Act, was released after a three-month extension of her detention.

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com