

Last week, Facebook, Google and Twitter announced the blocking of dozens of accounts and websites that were reportedly linked to the Iranian authorities. Reuters conducted its own investigation and identified “a ramified Iranian network of misinformation and political manipulation”.

Reuters found ten anonymous websites and dozens of accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. According to the Agency, they are part of Tehran’s project to spread its state propaganda around the world.

FireEye and ClearSky, which develop software in the field of cybersecurity, told Reuters that these websites and accounts belong to the International Union of Virtual Media (IUVM), an organization that works for the Iranian authorities. It distributes the content of Iranian state media, such as PressTV and the FARS agency, or al-Manar TV channel, owned by the Shiite movement Hezbollah, which is supported by Tehran. In this case, IUVM often hides the source of content when distributed it on social networks and on its own websites.

Reuters found materials can only be a part of the large-scale activities of the Iranian authorities on the Internet. Last week, Facebook reported the removal of 652 pages, groups and accounts that are, according to the social network, related to the hidden disinformation campaign in favor of Iran. And a couple of days later it became known about the massive removal of accounts by Google. It discovered and removed 39 channels on YouTube, six blogs on the Blogger platform and 13 Google+ accounts linked to “Iranian propaganda”.

“This is a huge mouthpiece for the Iranian regime”, – Ben Nimmo, a senior researcher at the digital expertise laboratory of the American Atlantic Council, quotes Reuters. – This shows how easy it is to conduct similar campaigns to spread influence on the Internet. The Iranian campaign is based on quality, not quantity, but it has remained unnoticed for years”.

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