

## Internet Freedom in Kazakhstan is in trouble!

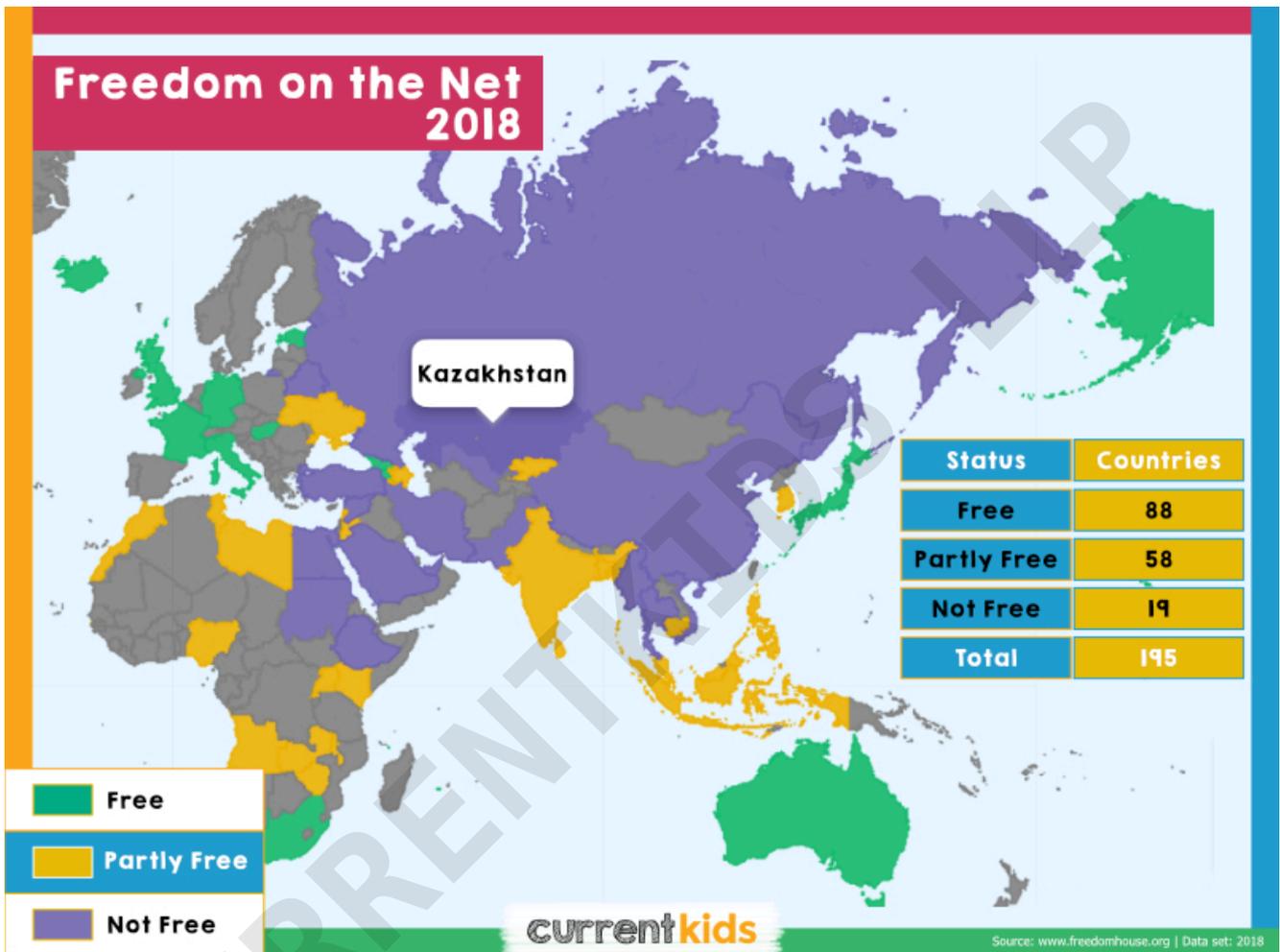
**We increasingly depend on the internet for our day to day life. We use it for email, to research information and knowledge, for social networking, to share ideas on blogs, to shop online, to pay bills, make hotel, plane and train bookings, watch videos.....oh the list is endless.**

The internet is also a space that allows people to express themselves freely and share ideas. The internet revolution has helped connect people across the globe.

As we increasingly rely on the internet, it is important that the rights we enjoy offline such as the freedoms of speech, information, privacy are protected online. There are some governments who don't believe in total internet freedom and restrict internet access in their countries. They censor what their countrymen can read by limiting access to websites. They sometimes track and record user activity on the internet. During protests, some strict leaders have also understood the internet's potential and have jammed connection to prevent people from communicating and spreading information.

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While Iceland is a country that has the most internet freedom, China, Russia, and North Korea are some examples of countries where there are strict internet censorship laws. Kazakhstan has recently come in the news for similar reasons.



Freedomonthenet

**Where is Kazakhstan?**



It is a Central Asian country that was part of the Soviet Union (USSR). It declared independence from the Soviet Union on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1991. Since then, for the next 28 years, the country was served by President Nursultan Nazarbayev. He is 78 years old and was a strict ruler. His government often took away basic human rights and freedoms from the citizens. It also controlled the media. He resigned in March 2019.

A new president, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, came into power in March, 2019. Many felt that he won the election unfairly and they protested peacefully. Hundreds of citizens were held and questioned by the police. Facebook and Telegram (an application similar to WhatsApp) were shut down in order to prevent communication, and this fuelled more protests.

In a new development, the Kazakhi government has forced all Internet Service Providers in the country to provide internet to their customers only if they install a special National Security Certificate. This certificate is like an ID card. It tracks the users identity online and reports their online activity to the government. The certificate will give a user unlimited access to 'allowed' websites. That is like giving a tiger all the grass in the world but no meat to eat!

The government says that this will prevent hacking and improve security. This does have its advantages. Fake news will not spread easily and violence can be prevented to some extent.

**What do you think about this development?** Do you think that people should have free access to all that is on the internet or should their access be limited to approved sites? Write in to us at [mail@currentkids.in](mailto:mail@currentkids.in) and let us know!



Vaijayanti is a writer, a nature enthusiast and an amateur wildlife photographer. She hopes her virtual pen and lens can make the world a better place.

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