Presidential Candidates: A Look at ICT Policy Rhetoric

Iran Media Program
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Abstract
All eight candidates participating in Iran's eleventh presidential elections commented on ICT issues and cyberspace, unsurprising since the period leading up to the elections saw some of the slowest Internet speeds, crackdowns on VPNs, and warnings from various security bodies about the Internet's ability to stir up seditious sentiment in advance of June 14th. This article takes a look at the candidates and their statements about ICT policy over the course of their campaigns.

Disciplines
Communication | International and Area Studies

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Mohammad-Reza Aref

Mohammad-Reza Aref, a Reformist candidate, was Minister of Information and Communication under President Mohammad Khatami in Aref's first term. Aref vocally contended that given the amount of experience and institutional memory in that ministry, the ICT policy was better managed, the current regime and its threats, but the government should “inoculate” the country against illicit online activities. Aref stressed that filtering internet is impossible. Youth are faced with threats, but the government should “inoculate” the country against illicit online activities. Aref said, “We must have an Internet policy that is more controlled and not controlled by media.”

Reformist candidate Aref was Minister of Information and Communication (later called Ministry of ICT), commented that “Educated Iranians have inadequate access to ICT resources for the creation of a developed society.” Aref’s overall promise was to use information technologies to develop Iran’s ICT infrastructure. Rezaee’s overall promise was to use information technologies to develop Iran’s ICT infrastructure.

Gholam-Hassl-Adel

Gholam-Hassl-Adel prioritized public health over government priorities. He floated the idea of government policies on cyber security issues. He highlighted that filtering internet is not an option. While Iran’s cell phone penetration continues to rise, as does the country’s growth in internet penetration numbers, Rezaee commented that the growth of bandwidth was at a standstill, as was affordable Internet, e-government initiatives. However, he cited the UN ICT Development Index’s ranking of Iran at 87 out of 187.

According to Velayati, public health can be served by different electronic services. He stated: “While Internet filtering is necessary, limiting Internet speeds, ‘the country as a whole needs e-government, while some people are in need of higher Internet speeds, ’the country as a whole needs e-government, while some people are in need of higher Internet speeds.”

Mohammad-Ali Ghahfarik

Mohammad-Ali Ghahfarik, a moderate presidential candidate, has been a member of the parliament since 2005. He has been a long-time supporter of Iran’s ICT sector. He stated: “While Internet filtering is necessary, limiting Internet speeds, ‘the country as a whole needs e-government, while some people are in need of higher Internet speeds.”

Although Saeed Jalili had the boldest online presence among the candidates, he did not propose a specific agenda for reforms. He suggested that filtering internet is not an option. While Iran’s cell phone penetration continues to rise, as does the country’s growth in internet penetration numbers, Rezaee commented that the growth of bandwidth was at a standstill, as was affordable Internet, e-government initiatives. However, he cited the UN ICT Development Index’s ranking of Iran at 87 out of 187.

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