# Nigeria urged not to cut social media during elections

Nigeria has two sets of elections scheduled in the coming weeks: the federal elections on February 16 and state elections on March 2. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has joined calls for Nigeria to ensure internet and social media services remain connected during elections.



An electoral worker prepares identity card and biometric verification readers, at the offices of the Independent National Electoral Commission in Kano, northern Nigeria, on February 14, 2019. CPJ joined a call for Nigeria to ensure that internet and social media services remain connected during the upcoming elections. Credit: CPJ/AP Photo/Ben Curtis.

The Committee to Protect Journalists joined more than 15 rights organisations and the #KeepItOn Coalition to call for Nigerian authorities to ensure that internet and social media services remain connected during upcoming elections, and safeguard internet speeds of websites and messaging applications.

In early February, Nigeria's federal government denied rumours of plans to shut down the internet during upcoming elections, according to the privately owned _Guardian Nigeria_ and _Quartz_ news outlets. Nigeria has two sets of elections scheduled in the coming weeks: federal elections on February 16 and state elections on March 2.

The letter, addressed to Umar Garba Danbatta, executive vice chairman and chief executive officer of the Nigerian Communications Commission, emphasised how internet disruptions inhibit journalists' ability to safely conduct reporting and run contrary to international law. It also highlighted additional social and economic costs of internet outages
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"The media is critical to this particular election and critical to people understanding both the [election's] processes and procedures," Festus Okoye, national commissioner of Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission, told CPJ on February 13.

Okoye also emphasised the importance of internet connectivity because the smart card readers used for voter identification are based on the internet. "Three networks - Glo, MTN, and Airtel - are powering them [the smart card readers], so if you jam the network there won't be any election... that's just the bottom line," he said.