**Dozens Indicted In Western Iran For Recent Protests And Unrest**

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Iranian judicial officials revealed that 43 people have been indicted in Iran’s western province of Kermanshah for participating in recent anti-establishment protests.

In an interview with Mizan Online, the official website of Iranian judiciary, Mohammad Hossein Sadeghi, the provincial public prosecutor said on Wednesday that the indicted individuals have been under the influence of “cyberspace” and their cases have been handed over to court for review.

Islamic Republic security and judicial officials, as well as hardliners, often try to explain away opposition activism as agitation from abroad, via the internet or satellite TV channels.

Sadeghi described the protests that occurred early this year as “sad incidents” and added that they have caused the country “damage”.

He acknowledged that they were “partially” due to economic problems in the country, but added that they were quickly led into “deconstructive behavior” that were eventually restrained by the judiciary and the security forces, “successfully”.

Sadeghi downplayed the number of the cases referred to courts and said the majority of those arrested had attended the protests “out of ignorance” and therefore they have been released on bail.

The prosecutor did not provide any details about the duration of sentences or the amount of any fines awaiting the accused.

The protests started on December 28, 2017 in eastern city of Mashhad with slogans against economic problems and corruption. Soon it spread throughout the country and turned into demonstrations against the clerical rule and specially the Supreme Leader ayatollah Khamenei. According to official numbers, thousands of protesters were detained and at least 25 of them have been killed.

The protests also led to a temporary filtering of the social media website Instagram and the messaging app Telegram. Protesters were using these platforms to organize rallies and publish their videos.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and some other Iranian officials have accused the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and Israel to be behind the protests. They claimed that these countries have used the internet and particularly the social media to ignite unrest in Iran.

In an op-ed for Radio Farda, Said Peyvandi, an Iranian sociologist residing in Paris describes the previous Persian calendar year which ended on March 20, as the year of the “big defeat” for the Iranian regime in the “media war”.

The widespread usage of telecommunication technologies, including social media have allowed Iranians to be connected without being under the radar of the regime, Peyvandi wrote.

According to him, the fact that some Iranian officials have been forced to react to news published on social media, and others to insist on their filtering, speaks for their importance.