

Some Telegram Channels Being Censored When App is Downloaded from Google Play Store

January 13, 2022 - As we reported earlier this month, if you are concerned with privacy and free speech your traditional text messages could be censored if you use T-Mobile or Verizon. We suspect that other phone carriers will soon follow suit too. Because of that, many mobile users are migrating to other platforms. Among those is Telegram; and for good reason.

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```
(function() {  
var s = document.createElement('SCRIPT'), s1 = document.getElementsByTagName('SCRIPT')[0];
```

```
s.type = 'text/javascript';  
s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';  
s1.parentNode.insertBefore(s, s1);  
})();
```

```
(function() {  
var po = document.createElement('script'); po.type = 'text/javascript'; po.async = true;  
po.src = 'https://apis.google.com/js/plusone.js';  
var s = document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(po, s);  
})();
```

Telegram is very similar to a traditional text messaging application. Once you download it to your phone and give it access to your phone's address book, you can see the names of everyone in that address book that also has Telegram on their phone. And you can send them direct messages, just like you can with whatever text messaging application that you normally use. The messages you send, and the messages that your contacts receive, appear in the Telegram app and they look pretty much like any other text message. But looks can be deceiving. Telegram gives its users much more control over their messages than traditional text messengers.

In the first place, Telegram is secure. Messages sent via the platform are encrypted. Your phone carrier has absolutely no idea what you are saying or what text links you're sending. That means that your messages aren't censored and can't be read by snooping eyes... including those of the government. In fact, Telegram has repeatedly been asked by governments around the globe to build in a back door to allow government monitoring of content. They have refused.

In addition to sending and receiving text messages, Telegram also allows people to setup channels which Telegram users can subscribe to. A channel is really more a one-way communication platform. If you have something to say and you can get 1,000 subscribers to your channel, as the channels administrator you can post information to all of those 1,000 subscribers as frequently as you like. I recently discovered however that Google is censoring certain channels.

When I first joined Telegram several months ago, I subscribed to a number of channels. Some of them were very good and, as it turned out, some of them weren't. Until this month though, I really hadn't paid too much attention to the channels I had subscribed to. When T-Mobile started censoring some text messages though, that changed. That's when I started to use Telegram to send certain texts that my carrier wouldn't allow.

As a part of the process of starting to work with Telegram, I decided to take a look at the channels I was subscribed to.

And when I clicked on one of them, I received a message that told me that versions of Telegram downloaded from Google Play Store wouldn't allow me to view that channel. I'm sorry, but I am the only person who gets to decide what I read.

There is a workaround to this for Android users, but you may have to change the settings on your phone. First, go to Telegram's website (<http://www.Telegram.org>) directly. You can download the application from there. When you go to install it though, you'll get a warning that applications can damage your system. Most people will also get a message that they have to change their settings to allow installations of applications from unknown sources. You'll have to acknowledge the first warning to move forward, and then follow the prompts to change your settings to go ahead with the installation. But when you are done, you'll find that any content that was previously censored is now available to you.

As it turned out, I didn't like or agree with the content in the channel that was censored in my original Telegram version, so I unsubscribed. But that was my choice, not Google's. Censorship in any form is dangerous. And it destroys privacy because it means that the content you create or read is being monitored. Allowing companies and governments to decide what information we can and can't have access to is even more dangerous. The only answer to objectionable speech is more speech. Censorship only leads to tyranny, and it isn't acceptable in any free society.

We don't know if Apple's App Store is censoring content on Telegram, but we'd love to hear from anyone who knows for sure.

by Jim Malmberg

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