

The online dance challenge spread to schools across the country
‘An enemy plot’: Iran launches crackdown after videos emerge of schoolgirls dancing
 Experts appointed to track down source of videos posted on social media

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Iranian authorities have launched an investigation into “disturbing” social media videos of schoolgirls dancing to a pop song. Education minister Mohammad Bathaei said a team of specialists had been appointed to trace the source of the videos, featuring the music of US-Iranian rapper Sasy. “The enemy is trying different ways to create anxiety among the people including by spreading these disturbing videos,” he said.

“I’m certain there’s some kind of political plot behind the publication of these devious clips in schools.”

The videos show groups of children – and even some teachers – taking part in an online dance challenge to the song “Gentleman”, according to the Center for Human Rights in Iran. Several clips of dancing children were also posted by the singer on his own Instagram page in defiance of the criticism from hardline conservatives in parliament.

After deputy speaker Ali Motahari called for the headteachers of the schools to be sacked, Sasy invited the politician to take part in the challenge before suggesting that he should focus on more important issues.

Seriously, you left the dollar, meat, high prices... and decided about “Gentleman”? wrote the singer, who has more than 2 million followers.

Another cabinet member, Tadbir Wamid, claimed the videos were “causing concern and disturbance of people’s beliefs about education”.

“It’s unclear exactly where the clips are, and how it is made,” he said. “That’s why we need the honourable prosecutor, as well as the cyberpolice, on the source and release of the clips.”

Ayatollah Abbas Ka’bi, a member of the Iran’s Guardian Council of the Constitution, also called for school officials to be prosecuted, claiming the videos were “part of the enemy’s cultural war” against Iran.

In another post on Saturday morning, Sasy responded: “Did not you think about one day talking about Friday prayers? This song is listened to once in school and thousands of times in homes... get to the big trouble of the country.”Iran’s judiciary and security forces are dominated by hardliners who launch periodic crackdowns on behaviour considered un-Islamic.

In 2014, seven Iranians were sentenced to six months in prison and 91 lashes, suspended for three years, for dancing in their homemade version of the Pharrell song “Happy”.

Last year an Iranian teenager posted videos of herself dancing in her bedroom. Maedeh Hojabri, an 18-year-old gymnast, was forced to issue an apology on state TV.

The education minister said that the investigation into the latest videos would ensure that “public trust and beliefs of the religious people in relation to the education system are not compromised”.

He added that arrangements would be made to “strengthen prayer” in schools, adding: “The only thing that can save students from dangers is prayers in schools.”

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authorities	appointed to	conservatives
launched	political plot	honourable
investigation	devious	prosecutor
disturbing	defiance	Cyber police
claim	judiciary	dominated
hardliners	periodic	suspended
issue	ensure	compromised
strengthen	deputy	considered

an official organization or a government department that has the power to make decisions, and has particular responsibilities	a lawyer who is trying to prove in a court of law that someone is guilty of a crime	an official attempt to find out the truth about or the cause of something such as a crime, accident, or scientific problem
happening a number of times, usually at regular times	to state that something is true, even though it has not been proved a considered opinion, reply, judgment etc is one that you have thought about carefully	worrying or upsetting
someone who is directly below another person in rank, and who is officially in charge when that person is not there	an agreement that is achieved after everyone involved accepts less than what they wanted at first, or the act of making this agreement	to choose someone for a position or a job
to make certain that something will happen properly	a subject or problem that is often discussed or argued about, especially a social or political matter that affects the interests of a lot of people	an honourable action or activity deserves respect and admiration
a secret plan by a group of people to do something harmful or illegal	using dishonest tricks and deceiving people in order to get what you want	behaviour that shows you refuse to do what someone tells you to do, especially because you do not respect them
to officially stop something from continuing, especially for a short time	not liking changes or new ideas	to start something, usually something big or important
a politician who wants political problems to be dealt with in a strong and extreme way	to become stronger or make something stronger	to have more importance than other people or things