

Connect timeless truths with today's news.

GOVERNMENTS FIGHT UNREST

Recent reports by UNESCO show a trend of governments using deliberate internet shutdowns in 2026. Iran is the latest nation to throttle or suspend online communications, with the disruptions now reaching beyond eighty days. In a world increasingly reliant on digital tools, shutdowns impact every sector: transportation, food, education, and medical care. They also create essential infrastructure challenges, in addition to disregarding the human right of communication. UNESCO cites renewed protests and political unrest as core drivers for Iran's leaders who are imposing the nationwide blackout. They join a growing list of governments employing this strategy around elections and protests, including Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, as well as Cameroon, Tanzania, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS FIGHT A MOVEMENT

It is an important time of growth in the church of Jerusalem (where most Christians reside in the early first century). The believer named Stephen is performing miracles to display God's grace. An influential synagogue takes notice of Jesus' followers, and they debate Stephen. Because Stephen has wisdom from the Holy Spirit, he is able to give a strong defense. Stephen's speech reviews the history of God's dealings with Israel, but the Sanhedrin only becomes angrier. Stephen has a momentary vision, seeing Jesus standing at the right hand of God in heaven. This is the last straw, and the crowd begins to stone him. As his last words, Stephen offers a prayer that requests forgiveness for the people who are killing him.

1. How much do you rely on technology in your everyday life?
2. Why do you think Stephen's message made the leaders so angry?
3. How do you make sense of Stephen's final words?

Additional Resources

Any videos or web materials are for your personal use. If you play any media files in class, be sure to have the necessary rights to do so.

Playlists

[Contemporary Worship Weekly](#)
[Echoes Worship Weekly](#) (featuring African-American music artists)
[Traditional Worship Weekly](#)

Study Resources

Commentary: [Katherine A. Shaner's "Commentary on Acts 6:1—7:2a, 44-60"](#)
Commentary: [Eric Barreto's "Commentary on Acts 6:1—7:2a, 44-60"](#)
Devotion: [Theology of Work on "A Martyr's Daily Work"](#)