NAWA Media

Introduction to Signal and Telegram

Section: 2.4

What is 'Signal'?

A signal is an open-source and cross-platform (available for android, iOS, and desktop) App and recommended by many security experts due to its privacy features, which are specifically designed to provide end-to-end encryption to the human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, and other social activists. The technology behind the signal is provided by Signal Foundation, which they recently received stable funding from the WhatsApp co-founder to maintain the App. It has been used by many well-known journalists and social activists to protect their online communication. There are no ads, trackers, or any other integration associated with the signal, which helps authorities to look into the app's content. Therefore, data cannot be shared with any third-party.

Download Signal here: **Android** and **iOS**.

When to use Signal?

Signal comes with no-backdoor policy, meaning, no one can access the content information between two parties.

So when to use Signal?
Is it necessary for every person?

The simple answer is the person who can be targeted, especially journalists and social activists, Signal is an absolute must for him/her.

The downside of Signal is, in some contexts, mere possession of the application on one's device can indicate that you're engaged in communication you don't want others to see.

When to use Signal?

There are few signal features that can help a user to protect his/her information and make them private:

- Signal has a built-in feature known as "screen lock" which prevents unauthorised users from looking into what information you are sharing with other users. To set up the screen lock, Go to the setting---> privacy and you can see toggle right next to the Screen lock. Just turn this on, and screen lock will be added.

- Another feature that comes with a signal is disappearing messages, which delete the message after a specific interval set up by the user. The countdown for the message disappearing will start right after the user sees the message. The message will disappear from both sender and receiver's side.

- "Note to Self" is a feature which a user can use to make notes for his/her self as a reminder and also adjust a timer on it.
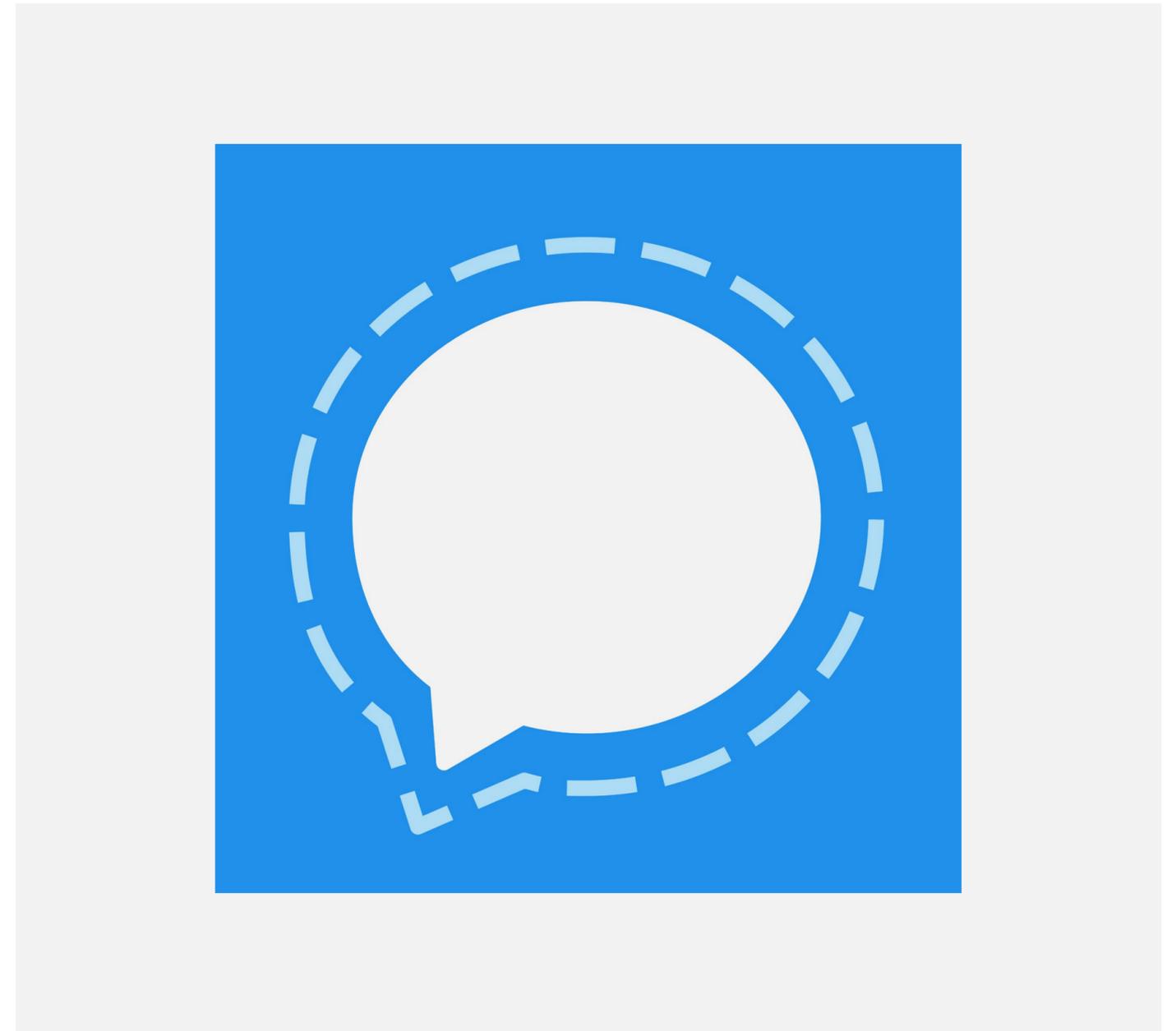
To use this feature, just write down "note to self" in a search bar, and it will appear.

How to use Signal?

To start using Signal, you must have a contact number which will be registered on Signal exactly like WhatsApp

There are options where signal can also become your default SMS/MMS application, but it is only available for Android users. Signal will automatically show you the list of already registered users on signal in your contact lists

It's clearly mentioned on Signal website that if you lose your mobile phone there is nothing you can do to recover the entire conversation.

What is 'Telegram'?

In the list of end-to-end encrypted communication softwares, Telegram also comes at the top and provides cloud-based instant messaging to its users. It is also one of the best alternatives due to its prioritization in security and other privacy features, including a fancy GUI provided to its user.

Unlike Signal, Telegram provides synchronization, which means you can use Telegram on all of your devices, including mobile phones, laptops and tablets at once. Telegram does not provide your personal information to third parties for ad targeting campaigns or other tracking activities.

Download Telegram here: **Android** and **iOS**.

Security and Privacy Features for Telegram

Telegram has different privacy features which help journalists to strengthen their online presence against other active users. Few of the features are mentioned below:

- Like other instant messaging apps, Telegram provides "blocked users" features which you can use to prevent someone from making contact with you. It is also restricted to be seen by other users.

- Telegram provides a feature to hide your phone numbers and 'last seen' feature from other users. It also allows you to restrict profile photos to be seen by other users.

- You can also restrict people to add you in different groups and channels.

- Passcode feature allows you to set up a pin code, which appears at your screen before opening an application. You can also set up a timer for Auto-Lock.

- You can see all the active sessions, and if you find any suspicious session, you can terminate the session instantly.

- One of the best and most common security features in Telegram is -2factor authentication. Telegram provides you with two authentication methods: SMS and Phone call.

- Telegram's "Secret Chat" feature allows you to enable end to end encryption, support self-destructing messages and prevent forwarding the message.

In the next section we will explore the pros and cons of using Signal over other messaging apps such as WhatsApp/ Facebook Messenger