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DONT BLOCK THE BLOG!

PRESS RELEASE

Recently the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, which monitors all internet traffic in Pakistan via the Pakistan Internet Exchange www.pie.net.pk has blocked access to thousands of websites hosted on the domain www.blogspot.com

For the record on the 27th of February 2006 the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority issued a letter banning a list of twelve blacklist websites, these websites were guilty of hosting the controversial cartoon images depicting Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and were spurring blasphemous discussion for the same.

Taking matters into their own hands the PTA decided to proactively place an Internet gateway block on these twelve offending websites from the 28th of February. This censorship would have barely made any news had it not been for a grave error on the part of the Network Administrating Authority which accidentally blocked the entire website of **www.blogspot.com** Blogspot is a project of Google Inc (Google.com) and caters to a new breed of websites called blogs, better understood as Web Logs are personal diaries maintained by many aspiring writers who share their thoughts with the world without any inhibitions, limited only by the words they type for the world to read and share. Blogs can be termed as a true example of freedom of expression allowing anyone to explore journalism which was previously limited to a select few in the print media. Over the five years of service Blogspot has grown exponentially and maintains upwards of 3 million blog publishers and each blog has a handsome following of readers reaching into the billions if not more.



For the record it is important to point out that all internet traffic going out of Pakistan is proactively monitored and recorded by the Pakistan Internet Exchange for a three-month period. This in itself is an invasion of privacy and now with the recent internet censorship can be termed as a flagrant misuse of powers by a governing body on the heartbeat of Internet access in Pakistan

Internet access is the key to any business, and if the governing body of the Internet in Pakistan continues to create hurdles it will discourage foreign investment, prime example of the mismanagement can also be found in the very recent past where Pakistan was cut off from the World Wide Web last year for a good 7-10 days resulting in a catastrophic loss amounting to a few billion dollars, even at that time the blame was attributed to the inadequacies of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority.

The *Don't Block the Blog* campaign (Help-Pakistan.com/main/dont-block-the-blog/) and the *Action Group Against Blogspot Ban in Pakistan* (groups.google.com/group/AGABBIP) would like to protest this blatant internet censorship in Pakistan, and urge the print and electronic media to exert pressure upon the Government of Pakistan to first lift the ban on the non-controversial blogspot websites and then also push for reform of the PTA before this incompetent authority can wreak havoc with a progressing Pakistan