

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



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Website URL: <http://help-pakistan.com/main>

Press Releases: <http://help-pakistan.com/main/press-release/>

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## **Pakistan Accidentally Blocks Millions of Websites In a Fumbled Censorship Filter**

In recent news, it has come to light that for a period of four days the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority accidentally blocked millions of websites which suddenly became inaccessible for internet users in Pakistan. The accidentally blocked sites are popular, non-controversial web pages with high traffic, including Google.com, Download.com, Microsoft.com, Gmail.com, Yahoo.com, BBC, CNN, Systematic, Akamai, PC World, MTV, Best Buy, Logitech and ESPN.

For over a year, the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) has been actively blocking a number of websites after the the Supreme Court of Pakistan ordered it to censor twelve specific websites. Upon its own initiative, in an apparent misuse of the Supreme Court order the PTA also blocked the entire blogspot.com domain which hosts over 20 million blogs .

Over the four days, a malfunctioning unit within the internet monitoring body accidentally started blocking some major websites, What irked internet users in general was the apathy exhibited by the concerned authorities in attempting to resolve this issue. Following true bureaucratic tenet, the PTA refused to acknowledge their fault and are currently in denial mode.

This recent incident of malfunctioning technology has suddenly forced the PTA to remove all blocking mechanisms that were previously being enforced on blogspot.com and other so called "offensive sites" which also included a number of Indian websites and blogs related to the promotion of the Baluchistan cause.

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We at **Don't Block the Blog** have been highlighting the inherent flaws in selective internet censorship and had predicted such disaster was likely to happen. Any type of filtering limits the access to information to the people of Pakistan. A four day incident such as what recently happened also portrays a negative image of Pakistan to foreign investors who are looking to approach Pakistan for IT development. Intermittent catastrophic failure of Internet access in Pakistan will, by itself, drive business from Pakistan to other countries.

Over the past year, the DON'T BLOCK THE BLOG campaign has been recognized both nationally and internationally as an credible organization highlighting free speech issues in Pakistan. The DBTB banner is hosted on a number of websites around the world, and is a testament that many people believe in supporting the cause of free speech in Pakistan.

We at Don't Block the Blog continue to strongly opposes any form of internet censorship and request national and international bloggers, print media, and free speech organizations to help support our cause and to continue to highlight this issue of the unfair blanket ban of blogs for internet users in Pakistan.

### **Background:**

The PTA (Pakistan Telecommunication Authority) initially blocked access to the blogspot domain on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2006, due to a Supreme Court decision dated 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2006 instructing the PTA to ban 12 offending websites which highlighted the blasphemous cartoons on the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In adherence to the Supreme Court ruling, all 12 sites were blocked including one that was hosted on the blogspot domain. But rather than block the offending blogspot website, the PTA blocked the entire domain (www.blogspot.com) which happens to be one of the most popular blog hosting domains hosting upwards of 8 million blogs globally, according to some estimates.

The **Don't Block the Blog (DBTB)** campaign (<http://www.help-pakistan.com/main/>) was launched by the Alvi-e team, **Dr. Awab Alvi** and **Omer Alvie**, on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2006 in order to highlight the unfair blanket ban of the blogspot domain and additionally to show support for free internet speech in general. Approximately at the same time the Society Against Internet Censorship in Pakistan (formerly known as The Action Group Against Blogspot Ban in Pakistan - AGABBIP) (<http://groups.google.com/group/AGABBIP>), a mailing list with dozens of contributing members also was formed to protest this form of censorship in Pakistan.

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