

Confirmation of court order could lead to return of internet censorship

The January 2011 revolution in Tunisia brought an end to internet filtering and control of online content but old habits seem to be resurfacing and Reporters Without Borders urges the Tunisian courts not to take any decision that could lead to the restoration of filtering.

A court order requiring the Tunisian Internet Agency (ATI) to block access to pornographic websites, upheld by a Tunis appeal court in August 2011, revived the debate about censorship. As the ATI had neither the financial resources nor technical capacity to establish a filtering system, it did not comply and referred the case to the Court of Cassation, the country's highest appeal court, which is due to issue a ruling in the coming days.

If the order is confirmed, the ATI will be forced to censor online content in accordance with a complaint brought by a group of lawyers calling for the blocking of pornographic content that poses a threat to minors and Muslim values. Although supposedly independent, the ATI would be obliged to implement censorship on behalf of the courts.

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