

Hacker halts three SA websites

A hacker has claimed responsibility for disrupting SA's Department of Social Development's website and hacking those of the National Planning Commission and the National Population Unit.

The Social Development Department's web address www.population.gov.za opened to a black page with a window containing the animated graphic *Website hacked by H4ksniper* and a graphic depicting a heart rate monitor yesterday (11 December).

Beneath it was the message: *Hello South Africa: Bad News For You I'M BACK! ... You Messed Wi[t]h Us & Now You Must Suffer... From Morocco with love.*

H4ksniper provided a link to the Facebook account of Moroccan *Haksnipx*, where he was accepting messages of support.

Asked the reasons for the attack, *H4ksniper* responded by e-mail: "We all know that SA is the first supporter of the [República Árabe Saharaui Democrática] RASD and the ennemi [sic] of Morocco since a long time and we are hackers and our goal is defending our country..."

According to *Wikipedia*, the RASD, which is also known as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), is a partially recognised state which claims sovereignty over the Western Sahara, but controls only about a fifth of the territory.

It calls itself the Liberated Territories or the Free Zone. Morocco controls and administers the rest, which it calls its Southern Provinces.

South Africa regards Western Sahara as illegally occupied by Morocco and wants greater self-determination for its residents.

In an e-mailed response, *H4ksniper* described himself as being "not black hat hackers".

"We don't have evil plans on our minds. We are grey hackers and we're defending our country and our religion!"

Grey-hat hacking refers to the activities of skilled hackers who disrupt websites to expose technological vulnerabilities or create public awareness about a particular issue.

Black-hat hackers destroy data or spread viruses, often for no given reason.

Social Development spokesman Lumka Oliphant said the department was not concerned that the hacker could have

accessed sensitive information.

"No sensitive information is on the website," she said.

The site is hosted by the SA State Information Technology Agency. The websites were restored by 2pm.

Source: *Sapa* and *The Times* via I-Net Bridge

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