

Egyptian authorities raid satellite communications supplier

The Egyptian government has initiated a drastic move to thwart satellite channels. It reportedly raided one of the most important companies offering satellite equipment for rent and confiscated five sets of its broadcasting equipment recently. This action may have serious consequences on the live broadcasting capacities of several satellite channels such as Al Jazeera, Dubai, Qatar and French TV.

On 16 April 2008, alleged security forces broke into the headquarters of Cairo News Company and confiscated five sets of live broadcasting equipment without providing any justification for the action. The authorities have also launched an investigation into the company without naming the offence allegedly committed. The company has been in operation for four years. It offers live broadcasting equipment for rent and services about 40 satellite channels in Egypt.

The latest action follows several other drastic measures aimed at undermining the operations of satellite channels. Already, three channels - Al Hiwar, Al Baraka, and Al Hikma - have been banned. Moreover, national party members working as editors-in-chief of the state-controlled newspapers have launched a campaign against satellite channels, as well as news and talk-show programs. The most recent attack was against a program entitled "Cairo Today", broadcast on Orbit channel.

"Confiscating broadcasting devices is a reprehensible act aimed at thwarting satellite channels to prevent them from broadcasting direct coverage of events in Egypt. The Egyptian government is building a wall around Egyptian citizens and is imposing an information blackout on them," said HRinfo. The organisation has urged the Egyptian government to release the confiscated equipment and to stop all forms of direct and indirect blocking of satellite broadcasting and the free flow of information.

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