

Dated 10th May 2014

Report of the Technical Experts

To address the blocking of the objectionable YouTube video in question in the subject Honourable Lahore High Court (LHC) petition, the Committee of experts constituted by the LHC noted the following points to put the question into perspective as well as the steps taken by the stakeholders so far:

- a) YouTube Website (www.youtube.com) was blocked pursuant to the Supreme Court (SC) interim decision dated 17-09-2012 in CP No. 104 of 2012 as no technical solution was available to just block all the copies of the objectionable movie "The Innocence of Muslims" on YouTube.
- b) As briefed by the Chairman Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) in the meeting, there are hundreds of copies of the video "Innocence of Muslims" are available on YouTube and other sites which link to the YouTube video. Many of these copies have been located by a diligent search conducted by the Ministry of IT and PTA and Google was made aware of these copies. However, since any user in the world can create new copies at any time, the list of video copies cannot be complete at any one point.
- c) As a result of the efforts of MoIT and PTA to have the objectionable movie removed, Google Inc. has, as a minimal measure, flagged majority of the copies of this objectionable video with Warning pages. These "interstitial" warning pages now warn the user that they are requesting objectionable content. However, due to the impossibility of creating a fully comprehensive list of all copies of the video, these warning pages cover only those copies that have been "flagged" by MoIT and PTA and appropriately marked by Google. There remains the possibility of "un-flagged" copies that would not have this warning page due to the constant update of new links.
- d) The current solution adopted pursuant to the SC order dated 17-9-2012 (turning off YouTube in its entirety) also has negative consequences including preventing access to an enormous number of educational and other useful videos in various categories.
- e) YouTube runs in two modes: http (open) and https (encrypted). The Committee of Experts agreed with PTA to the fact that in http mode, the PTA can block specific copies of the video as was the practice previously whereas in https mode, blocking of this video is not possible (even with some of the radical techniques proposed till date) since the specific video being requested by the user cannot be detected by an intermediary such as PTA.
- f) The Chairman also highlighted that in almost all Muslim countries including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Malaysia, Bangladesh etc, YouTube is open. Some countries have their localized versions of the website. Some countries have their technical solutions but they are for general censorship of internet not specific to YouTube. PTA once again reiterated that no known technical solution is available that can ensure 100% blocking of the controversial movie.





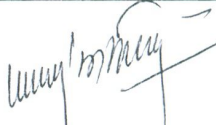
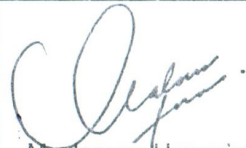
In view of the foregoing facts following three options to block objectionable movie were discussed:

- a) Bar all access to YouTube (the status quo)
- b) A solution, as proposed by the private sector technical experts, which bars YouTube access on https platform while keeping access on the http platform. On the http platform, access to the objectionable video would be blocked by continuous and rigorous monitoring of YouTube for the purpose of identifying http URLs containing objectionable video for blocking. However, blocking https access to YouTube will result in compromising important aspects of YouTube usage such as creation and uploading of local content. As such, this option only offers a partial solution. Finally, the technical solution will take some time to develop on a national scale.
- c) Display of 'Interstitial warnings' on the pages containing the objectionable video. This requires PTA to continue monitoring and surveillance for flagging known copies of the objectionable video and communicate to Google for displaying such warnings on those copies, with the possibility of certain "unflagged" copies of the objectionable video still being available on YouTube. Even "flagged" copies are not "blocked" as such.

Keeping within the court mandated topic of technical solutions for "blocking" there was a consensus among the group of Technical Experts and technical staff of PTA and MoIT that, currently, 100% blocking of the objectionable video is not possible owing to the nature of the internet and the https protocol through which access to copies of the objectionable movie on YouTube was happening. Blocking can only be done on "best effort basis".

Notwithstanding the options discussed above, MoIT and PTA will continue to engage with Google for having a localized version of the YouTube website. For this purpose, Federal Government will expedite the passage of the Cyber Crimes Bill which provides Intermediary Liability Protection, a pre-requisite for enabling a localized version of YouTube for Pakistan.

The private sector technical experts are also separately submitting a report that addresses the three options discussed above in more detail and present their specific recommendations.

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