Egyptian regulator appeals against court's YouTube ban

(Reuters) - Egyptian authorities appealed on Thursday against a court order banning the video file-sharing site YouTube for a month over an amateur video that denigrates the Prophet Mohammad, saying the ruling was unenforceable.

"The National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority has presented an appeal to halt implementation of the verdict," said a statement from the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.

Egypt's administrative court ordered the ministries of communication and investment to block YouTube, owned by Google, inside the country because it had carried the film "Innocence of Muslims", said the state news agency MENA.

The low-budget 13-minute video, billed as a film trailer and made in California with private funding, provoked a wave of anti-American unrest in Egypt, Libya and dozens of other Muslim countries in September.

The video depicts the Prophet as a fool and a sexual deviant. For most Muslims, any portrayal of the Prophet is considered blasphemous.

A statement issued after talks between ministry officials and the telecoms regulator said it was technically impossible to shut down YouTube in Egypt without affecting Google's Internet search engine, incurring potentially huge costs and job losses.

"The government cannot carry out the contents of the verdict within Egypt's borders," the statement said. The only step the authorities could take was to block the offending film within Egypt, which had already been done.

Only the United States had the capability to shut down YouTube, it said.

"Blocking YouTube would affect the search engine of Google, of which Egypt is the second biggest user in the Middle East," the statement said. This would cause losses to the economy of up to hundreds of millions of Egyptian pounds (tens of millions of dollars) and affect thousands of jobs, it added.

In a statement, Google said it had created a simple mechanism for legal authorities to request the blocking of content viewed as illegal.

(Reporting by Tom Perry; Writing by Paul Taylor; Editing by Kevin Liffey)

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