

Apple blocking Dalai Lama, Kadeer, iPhone apps: report

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The iPhone 3G. Bowing to Chinese law, Apple is reportedly blocking iPhone users in China from downloading applications about two figures Beijing considers "separatists": the Dalai Lama and exiled Uighur leader Rebiya Kadeer.

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IDG News Service said at least five [iPhone](#) software programs related to the Tibetan spiritual leader are unavailable in Apple's China App Store along with one related to Kadeer.

IDG, publisher of Macworld, Computerworld, PC World and other magazines, said the move would make Apple the latest US technology giant to censor its services in China.

Asked for comment on Thursday by AFP, Trudy Muller, an Apple spokeswoman, repeated a statement she made to IDG. "We continue to comply with local laws," Muller said. "Not all apps are available in every country."

China regularly blocks access to websites deemed sensitive and a number of US companies, including Microsoft, Cisco, [Google](#) and Yahoo!, have been hauled before the US Congress in recent years and accused of complicity in building what has been called the "Great Firewall of China."

US technology firms contend they must comply with China's laws in order to operate there.

China accuses the Dalai Lama of seeking to establish an independent Tibet and photos of the exiled leader have been banned in Tibet for years.

The US-based Kadeer has been branded a "criminal" by Chinese authorities who have blamed her for bloody riots in the Xinjiang capital Urumqi pitting mainly Muslim minority Uighurs against members of China's dominant Han group.

IDG said the paid and free iPhone applications which are unavailable in China provide inspirational quotes from the Dalai Lama or information about Nobel peace prize winners. The Dalai Lama is the 1989 Nobel peace laureate.

IDG said tests performed on four out of five iPhones at the [Apple Store](#)

in Beijing did not return any results for the term "Dalai." It said one did display the Dalai Lama applications but it was unclear why.

Test searches for a Kadeer application called "10 Conditions" did not return any results, it said.

IDG said Apple lets software developers choose the countries where their products appear but it was unlikely the Kadeer and Dalai Lama program developers had decided to make their products unavailable in China.

"It's of course very likely that it's Apple, not the developers, that are preventing certain apps from appearing," an unidentified China-based app developer told IDG.

James Sugrue, designer of the Dalai Quotes app, told IDG he "wasn't informed" by Apple that his program was unavailable in China.

"Apple reserve the right to do this sort of thing, and while from a censorship point of view I disagree with this, I can understand why they did," Sugrue said.

In August last year, access to iTunes was temporarily blocked for users in China after a pro-Tibet album became a hit on Apple's online music store.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) on Thursday said it had asked Apple about the reported blocking of [Dalai Lama](#) iPhone applications.

"In the spirit of transparency, the company should release a complete list of the censored applications -- if indeed censorship is going on -- and the criteria used to make the selections," RSF said in a statement.

"If [Apple](#) has agreed to remove products from the App Store under pressure from the authorities, the American company would join the club of those complicit in censorship of information in China," the France-based group said.

"This would be a big disappointment on the part of a company known for its creative spirit," the media rights group added.

Chinese telecom carrier China Unicom began selling the iPhone in [China](#) two months ago.

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