

China nabs 5,400 people for online porn in 2009

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(AP) -- Chinese authorities caught nearly 5,400 suspects last year in a crackdown on online pornography and have vowed to strengthen Internet policing.

Beijing's pervasive policing of cyberspace and attempts to block the Internet are already among the world's most stringent. In a statement late Thursday, the Ministry of Public Security said the "purification of the Internet" and fighting of online crime are closely tied to the country's stability.

"Lewd and pornographic content seriously pollutes the online environment, depraves social morals and poisons the physical and psychological health of the masses of young people," the statement said. "It must be firmly controlled."

The ministry said nearly 9,000 pornographic Web sites have been deleted from the Internet and 5,394 suspects captured in 2009, although it did not say how many of them were formally arrested or charged.

It said future efforts would focus on China-based operators of overseas-registered Web sites and companies that provide Internet services, or register [domain names](#) or rent virtual space to sites with pornographic content. The ministry also offered rewards to members of the public who provide useful information in policing efforts.

The communist government says the main targets of its Web censorship

are pornography, gambling and other sites deemed harmful to society. Critics, however, say that often acts as cover for detecting and blocking sensitive political content. Its restrictions of the Internet are often referred to as the "Great Firewall of [China](#)."

Many foreign sites have been blocked by China's Internet authorities, including YouTube, Facebook, [Twitter](#) and a host of other media and news Web sites.

Last year, China backed down from a requirement for new computers to be loaded with a controversial [Internet-filtering software](#) known as Green Dam Youth escort after a major outcry from Chinese citizens and computer companies. That software had been introduced as a filter against porn.

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