

# China says Internet fully restored in Xinjiang

May 14 2010, By SCOTT McDONALD , Associated Press Writer

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(AP) -- China's riot-torn western region of Xinjiang said it fully restored the Internet on Friday, 10 months after shutting down access over allegations that agitators used the Web to stir up ethnic violence that killed nearly 200 people.

Internet access and text messaging services were cut in the wake of the July riots in Xinjiang that wounded an additional 1,600 people and sparked a massive security crackdown still in place. Almost 200 accused rioters have been tried and several dozen death sentences handed down.

China blamed the rioting on overseas-based groups agitating for broader rights for Xinjiang's traditional majority Uighur ethnic group and cut Internet service in the region, saying the Web had been used to foment unrest.

Internet services were partially restored at the end of last year, while limited phone texting services began last month.

"For the stability, economic development and the needs of people from all [ethnic backgrounds](#) of the autonomous region, the Communist Party and the government of Xinjiang decided to fully resume Internet services beginning May 14," the news office of the Xinjiang government said in a statement posted on a government website.

The severing of Internet connections in Xinjiang was more than just an inconvenience. Businesses who trade throughout Central Asia were forced to use faxes or send staff into neighboring provinces to access e-

mail, while scientists found themselves shut off from research partners elsewhere. Many ordinary people relied on friends and family elsewhere in China to download their e-mails and pass the information on to them.

Even with services restored, China's countrywide blocks on websites it considers politically sensitive continue to restrict access to news and other information.

At the China International Electronic Commerce Center in the regional capital Urumqi, a woman who refused to give her name, confirmed Friday that [YouTube](#) and [Facebook](#) were blocked in Xinjiang.

Beijing encourages Internet use for education and business but tries to thwart access to material deemed subversive or pornographic, including websites abroad run by human rights and pro-democracy activists. The actions to keep China's citizens from finding politically sensitive information and images online have been dubbed the "Great Firewall."

U.S. State Department spokesman Philip J. Crowley told reporters that Internet freedom would be part of the discussion in human rights talks Thursday and Friday with [China](#) in Washington.

Chinese authorities have been accused of alienating the Uighurs (pronounced WEE-gurs), who are ethnically and linguistically distinct from China's majority Han, with tight restrictions on cultural and religious expression and nonviolent dissent. Many Uighurs also resent the presence and relative prosperity of Han who have flooded into Xinjiang since the communist revolution in 1949.

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