

Facebook page that led to Pakistani ban removed

May 21 2010, By CHRIS BRUMMITT , Associated Press Writer



Pakistani women participate in a rally against a Facebook page, in Islamabad, Pakistan, Thursday, May 20, 2010. Pakistan government ordered Internet service providers to block the social networking site amid anger over a page that encourages users to post images of Islam's Prophet Muhammad. (AP Photo/B.K.Bangash)

(AP) -- A Facebook page that was considered offensive to Islam and led to a Pakistani ban on the site has been removed, possibly by its creator.

Facebook said Friday it has not taken any action on the page, which had attracted more than 100,000 users and encouraged users to post images of Islam's [Prophet Muhammad](#), purportedly in support of [freedom of speech](#).

Most [Muslims](#) regard any depiction of the prophet, even favorable ones,

as blasphemous.

Najibullah Malik, the secretary at Pakistan's information technology ministry, said earlier Friday that the government had no option but to shut down [Facebook](#) on Wednesday after a court order to do so.

"We know some people are suffering because of this blockade, but we have to obey the court order in letter and spirit," Malik said.

Pakistan said it would consider restoring Facebook and other sites with related content only if they took down pages considered offensive to [Islam](#).

There was no immediate word on whether the government was lifting the ban.

The Facebook page, called "Everybody Draw Mohammed Day!," had declared Thursday as the day to draw Mohammed, so it was possible the creator took it down Friday because the page had served its purpose.

Other sites have also been affected in the country as officials scramble to block content related to the Facebook page. Wikipedia's English-language site and the Flickr photo-sharing site were also sporadically unavailable Friday.

It was not the first time depictions of the prophet have angered Muslims. In 2005, cartoons of Muhammad appeared in a Danish newspaper, sparking protests and riots from Muslims around the world, including in Pakistan, where the protests turned violent.

There have been several rallies against Facebook in recent days.

Others - mostly members of the more secular, educated elite - accused

the government of blocking freedom of expression and hurting small businesses that use Facebook for marketing. Many questioned need for the entire Facebook and YouTube sites to be blocked, instead of individual pages.

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