

Saudi BlackBerry's still online as 'talks progress'

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A Saudi Arabian man checks his BlackBerry at a store in the Red Sea coastal city of Jeddah. BlackBerry users in Saudi Arabia said messaging services remained online despite a ban, as a mobile phone company reported progress in talks with the smartphone's Canadian makers.

BlackBerry users in Saudi Arabia said messaging services remained online on Saturday despite a ban, as a mobile phone company reported

progress in talks with the smartphone's Canadian makers.

Several BlackBerry subscribers in the western port city and business hub of Jeddah said the service had been working uninterrupted since it was reinstated after a four-hour suspension on Friday.

The Saudi telecommunications authority announced earlier in the week it had ordered the conservative Muslim kingdom's three mobile phone providers to block key BlackBerry services or face a 1.3-million-dollar fine as of August 6.

An official at one of the companies said on Saturday that negotiations were making progress with BlackBerry maker [Research In Motion](#) (RIM) in a bid to have the device conform with Saudi laws.

"A solution is in sight with the Canadian company," the official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The telecoms regulator had said the suspension was because "the way BlackBerry services are provided currently does not meet the regulatory criteria of the commission and the licensing conditions."

BlackBerry's encrypted emails and data are stored on servers in Canada, where RIM is based, meaning that third parties such as intelligence agencies can not monitor communications.

The brief Saudi shutdown came five days after the United Arab Emirates announced it would also cut off the messenger, email and web browsing services of the [BlackBerry](#) on October 11 over security concerns.

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