

Malaysia seeks to ban sites for illegal downloads

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(AP) -- Thousands of Malaysians joined an online protest Sunday against a government effort to block access to 10 popular websites often used to illegally download movies, TV shows and music.

It is the biggest move to curb Internet entertainment piracy in Malaysia, which has long been accused by industry officials of not cracking down hard enough on the rampant sale of bootleg DVDs and CDs.

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, a government regulatory body, said Friday that it wanted Internet service providers to block 10 websites that violated copyright laws.

More than 6,500 people have since joined a [Facebook](#) page slamming the decision, with some saying the government had reneged on its pledge not to censor the Internet.

"I think it is the stupidest move ever," wrote Satila Suhaimi Kelly, one of the Facebook group's members. "I use (the websites) to share my own personal photos and videos with friends and family all around the world."

The ban appeared to be erratically enforced by Malaysian Internet providers. Most users complained Saturday they couldn't surf the sites, but some were able to by Sunday. Others used alternative access routes to circumvent the ban.

The websites include the [Pirate Bay](#), a Sweden-based site that has faced lawsuits by entertainment companies in Europe over complaints of [copyright infringement](#).

The Multimedia Commission has defended the ban, saying it was asked by Malaysia's Domestic Trade Ministry to help enforce copyright regulations. It denied the move amounted to censorship.

Malaysian filmmaker Norman Abd Halim told The Star newspaper he welcomed the move.

"The unauthorized use of copyrighted work is destroying the industry," the daily quoted him as saying.

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