

Brazilian court bans anti-Islam film from YouTube

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(AP)—A court in Brazil said it has ordered YouTube to remove clips of the movie that has touched off deadly protests across the Muslim world, the latest in a spate of court-ordered content-removal cases against the video-sharing site here.

Sao Paulo-based judge Gilson Delgado Miranda gave the site ten days to remove videos of "Innocence of Muslims," which has raised the ire of many Muslims around the world because of its depiction of the Prophet Mohammed and his followers as thugs. After the 10-day window, YouTube's parent company, Google Inc., will face fines of \$5,000 a day for every day the clips remain accessible in Brazil, according to the statement posted on the court's website late Tuesday.

The company did not respond to requests Wednesday for comment about the case.

The ruling adds a legal hurdle to Google's attempts to expand in Brazil. In recent weeks, Brazilian courts have repeatedly ordered the company to remove content from YouTube that was found to violate the country's strict electoral laws, and a judge on Tuesday ordered the arrest of the head of Google's operations in Brazil for failing to remove the offending videos.

The "Innocence of Muslims" ruling resulted from a lawsuit by a group representing Brazil's Muslim community, the National Union of Islamic Entities, which claimed the film violates the country's constitutional

guarantee of religious freedom for all faiths.

In a statement on the group's website, Mohamad al Bukai, the head of religious matters for the Sao Paulo-based organization, hailed the ruling as a victory.

"Freedom of expression must not be confused with giving disproportionate and irresponsible offense, which can provoke serious consequences for society," al Bukai said.

At least 51 people, including the U.S. ambassador to Libya, have been killed in violence linked to protests over "Innocence of Muslims," which portrays the Prophet Muhammad as a fraud, a womanizer and a child molester. Attempts by courts and officials in several countries to remove the clips have revived the debate over freedom of expression.

The judge in the Brazilian case acknowledged that banning content from sites like YouTube was a thorny issue, according to excerpts of the ruling cited in the National Union of Islamic Entities' statement.

"This type of jurisprudence cannot be confused with censorship," Miranda is quoted as writing. In the excerpts, the judge defines censorship as "the undue restriction of the civic consciousness."

YouTube routinely blocks video in specific countries if it violates laws there. It also removes video deemed to infringe copyrights, show pornography, contain hate speech or violate other guidelines.

However, none of those restrictions had been applied here to the "Innocence of Muslims," which Google is now selectively blocking in countries including Libya and Egypt. Google has explained it made the decision to block the video there due to "the sensitive situations" there.

Eva Galperin of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, which promotes digital freedom, questioned whether a ban was really necessary in Brazil, which has seen none of the protests or rioting that have swept the Muslim world in recent weeks.

"The notion that there's a need to take it down to prevent violence is ludicrous," she said.

Judge Miranda's ruling came on the same day that Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff addressed the United Nations and urged an end to prejudice against Muslims.

Brazil's strict electoral laws restrict what critics can say on television and radio about candidates for office. Ahead of municipal elections next month, Google has received repeatedly requests to remove videos that violate those restrictions, and on Tuesday, a judge in Mato Grosso do Sul state ordered the arrest of the head of Google's operations in Brazil for failure to take down YouTube videos that attacked a mayoral candidate.

That ruling also included an order to remove the videos, which make incendiary comments about an alleged paternity suit aimed at a mayoral candidate in the city of Campo Grande, as well as statewide, 24-hour suspension of Google and YouTube.

Google said in an emailed statement on Tuesday that it was appealing the decision. "Being a platform, Google is not responsible for the content posted on its site," the company said in an emailed statement from Sao Paulo.

Earlier, a judge in the southern state of Parana ordered Google to pay \$500,000 for each day that it balked at fulfilling an order to remove other videos criticizing a candidate. In the northeastern state of Paraiba, a judge also ordered the imprisonment of another Google executive in

Brazil, also for not removing videos from YouTube attacking a mayoral candidate. That order was overruled by a higher court.

Galperin said called the rash of Brazilian cases was "disappointing, but not surprising" ahead of the country's nationwide municipal elections on Oct. 7 and Oct. 28.

"The Internet is global, but laws are made nation by nation," she said. "There is a struggle between nation states and their laws and the freedom of expression policies of companies that host content all over the globe."

Google has said it's been so inundated by requests by governments worldwide to remove online content that it has begun releasing a summary of the demands, most relating to legitimate attempts to enforce laws on issues ranging from personal privacy to hate speech. But Google, which has been locked in a high-profile battle with China's leaders over online censorship in the communist nation since 2010, says it increasingly fields requests from government agencies trying to use their power to suppress political opinions and other material they don't like.

Brazilian governmental agencies alone submitted a total of 194 content removal requests during the final half of last year, according to a summary released in June. Running just behind that was the United States, where police, prosecutors, courts and other government agencies submitted 187 requests to remove content over the same period.

Brazil and other parts of Latin America are crucial to Google's growth strategy. Company executives have said that Latin America is the country's fastest-growing market.

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