

Sina suspends book site after pornography reported

April 25 2014, by Louise Watt



A purple dialog box announces the temporary closure of the literature site as it undergoes "a self-correction action" on the Chinese web giant Sina.com books site displayed on a computer in Beijing, China, Friday, April 25, 2014. Chinese web giant Sina.com temporarily closed its literature site Friday after reports it would lose two crucial publication licenses for hosting pornography. Sina decided to take books off its site while it undergoes "a self-correction action" to screen their content, according to a notice on its reading channel. Book reviews, cultural news, author biographies and interviews were still available.(AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

Sina.com temporarily closed its literature site Friday after being accused of hosting pornography, and authorities confirmed they were revoking two crucial licenses, ensnaring one of China's top web portals in an intensifying online crackdown.

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While the government periodically launches campaigns targeting obscene or improper content, this is the first time a major Internet company has faced such a heavy punishment, which will likely serve as a warning to other big players. The latest anti-pornography campaign comes amid a wider crackdown on online expression that has seen individual microblogs closed and punishments for spreading rumors online.

The Beijing Cultural Law Enforcement Agency, a body under the city government responsible for clamping down on pornography and illegal publication, said there were still some procedures to go through before Sina's licenses were revoked.

"We delivered a note of punishment to Sina that states the two licenses will be revoked," Shen Rui, head of the online enforcement task force at Beijing Cultural Law Enforcement Agency, said Friday.

Shen said Sina would be fined but the amount hadn't yet been verified, and that according to law it would be fined five to 10 times the illegal income made from the pornographic material.

He said the licenses would be revoked by the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television. No one was available to

comment there.

State media reported prominently Thursday and Friday that broadcasting authorities had decided to revoke Sina's licenses on Internet publishing and online audiovisual broadcasting and impose "a large number of fines," while some of its employees were being investigated by police. It said this might have the effect of partially banning the company's operations, and that the move came after authorities allegedly found pornographic content on its literature and video sites. Sina's video site was still operating normally Friday.

A spokesman from Sina said he had no immediate comment and later calls to his office were not answered.

Sina has the right to appeal the decision.

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