

Free Internet service for over 3 million Egyptians shut down

December 30 2015, by Brian Rohan



In this March 30, 2011, file photo, an art student from the University of Helwan paints the Facebook logo on a mural commemorating the revolution that overthrew Hosni Mubarak in the Zamalek neighborhood of Cairo, Egypt. In a statement to The Associated Press on Wednesday, Dec 30, 2015, Facebook said it is "disappointed" that a program providing free basic Internet services to over three million Egyptians has been shut down. It said the service provided Internet access to more than a million people who were not previously connected. (AP Photo/Manoosher Deghati, File)

A program that had been giving free basic Internet services to over three million Egyptians was shut down on Wednesday, social media site Facebook said.

In a statement to The Associated Press, Facebook said it hoped to "resolve this situation soon" so the program, which it had launched with Etisalat Egypt some two months ago, could be restored.

"We're disappointed that Free Basics will no longer be available in Egypt," it said. "More than 1 million people who were previously unconnected had been using the Internet because of these efforts."

The service, which is aimed at users in developing countries, connects a billion people worldwide, providing free health, education, and economic information.

It was not immediately clear why the program was halted. Neither Etisalat nor Egyptian officials could immediately be reached for comment. The program was recently highlighted at an entrepreneurship fair in Cairo.

Facebook and other [social media](#) sites are extremely popular in Egypt, and were used to organize protests during the 2011 uprising that toppled longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak.

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