

Brazil Justice Orders Google to Close Communities Promoting Drugs

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Google has been ordered by Brazil's Federal Justice to close immediately four Orkut communities that promote and sell lança-perfume (literally, perfume thrower), a mixture of chloroform and dyethyl ether that Brazilians since the 1920s love to smell to get high.

The product, sold in metal canisters, is generally imported from Argentina these days. Made illegal since the early 1960s, lança-perfume sniffing in Brazil can get you a 3 to 15 year jail term.

Orkut, the Internet social network service, which is extremely popular in Brazil has 97 communities with the name lança perfume in it. Although most of them were created to celebrate the high the drug promotes, at least one exists to condemn the product and another congregates people who like a band called Lança Perfume.

The court injunction against Google was issued by a federal court in the state of Minas Gerais, in the Brazilian southeast. This might be because one of the most popular of the communities exalting lança-perfume, with 763 members, promises that "here you will find everything related to lança perfume in the state of Minas Gerais."

Judge João Batista Ribeiro has also ordered Google to keep the banned pages in their archives so that they can be used as evidence against the drug promoters.

Google will have to pay 334.131 reais (roughly US\$ 156,000) for each of the communities it allows to continue open. And the judge wrote in typical legalese: "We cannot admit that a social network owned by Google, whose aim is to create and maintain relationships amongst its members and that congregates around 10 million users in the country, reach a public which is less mature, especially children and teen agers, subjecting them to socially undesirable consequences in their upbringing or behavior."

In São Paulo, the Federal Prosecutor office is also ready to file civil and criminal suits against Google and its Orkut service. The Internet company is accused of refusing to turn in information on users who use Orkut to practice illegal activities such as child pornography and hate crimes. The Brazilian authorities threaten to close Google's office in the country if they don't comply.