

Brazil Congress Enters Fray Against Google, Charged with Sheltering Pedophiles

Contributed by Elaine Patricia Cruz
Tuesday, 22 August 2006

These are some of the sins Google is being charged with committing in Brazil through the pages of its relationship site, Orkut: apology of and incitement to crimes against life, backing of Neo-Nazi groups activities, and encouraging racism, religious intolerance, homophobia and xenophobia and cruelty against animals.

According to the non-governmental organization (ONG) SaferNet, created last year with the goal of advancing and defending human rights in the Brazilian Internet, pages with contents of this nature can be easily found in the relationship site Orkut, maintained by Google.

Out of the 105,971 charges of crimes carried out in the Brazilian Internet compiled by the ONG. between January 30 and August 22, 100,252 are related to profiles and communities in Orkut. The number represents over 93% of all the charges filed.

The most common crimes denounced are those of child pornography and pedophilia. They make up about 39,65% of the 39,000 crime charges made against Orkut. It's estimated that about 40,000 images with pornographic content and involving children were published in the site since the end of January, 2006.

The charges were sent to the Federal Prosecutor's Office, which recorded a public civil suit that demands that Google cooperate with investigating the crimes. The lawsuit asks the Federal Justice to compel Google to immediately comply with the decisions or be subject to a daily fine of 200,000 reais (US\$ 94,000) for each order not fulfilled plus compensation for collective moral damage in the value of 130 million reais (US\$ 61 million), which corresponds to 1% of the gross revenue of the group Google in the world.

The fine, according to the lawsuit, would be earmarked to benefit Brazil's national fund for children and adolescents, managed by the Conanda (National Board of Child and Adolescent Rights). In case the company keeps on refusing cooperation, the lawsuit asks for Google Brasil to be shut down.

Says Thiago Tavares, president of SaferNet, "On August 3, we received a letter from the House's Human Rights and Minorities Commission asking SaferNet to assist for free with technical and scientific support in the elaboration of a report that will be sent by the Brazilian National Congress to the United States Congress."

According to Tavares, the report that will soon be sent by the Brazilian government deals mostly with the crime of child pornography, especially in the Orkut site. Today, Brazilians make up 70% of all the Orkut's members around the world.

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