

Google Gets Fined in Brazil. Offense: Not Removing Abusive Material

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Brazilian judge Alexandre Zanetti Stauber has sentenced Google of Brazil to pay a fine of over US\$ 6,000 for refusing to remove from its social networking site Orkut a community that the judge considers offensive.

According to the magazine Consultor Jurídico, the suit against Google was filed in court in July by attorney Henrique Eduardo Duarte Saad on behalf of a non-identified man who complained that a group of people had created communities and fake profiles in Orkut that were offensive to his honor.

Five days after the court filing Google was ordered by the judge to promptly remove the offending pages and to turn in their authors' identities.

It was also decided that the Internet search company would have to pay a 1,000 reais (US\$ 452) fine for everyday the pages were kept on the site, up to the limit of 14,000 reais (US\$ 6,300). Since Google did not comply with the court order the fine was imposed.

The suit states that the first virtual community against the victim was created more than one year ago. The group had around 40 people who exchanged offensive comments against the plaintiff.

The lawsuit also says that a fake profile was created to smear the victim and two other communities were also formed later with the same intent of defamation and slandering.

"Even in the personal profiles, there were distorted references to the reality, with the clear intent of morally offending him. Besides, through this fake profile, the anonymous user sent rude messages to the plaintiff's brother, mother and girlfriend," reads the suit.

Says lawyer Saad, "Orkut has become famous primarily as a relationship site, but it is undeniable that such goal has often been distorted. With the practice of preserving users' anonymity the Orkut site provides a fertile space for the practice of crimes, putting in risk the right of third parties, who for sure will have to be compensated."

Caught by Justice's Arm

The Brazilian police has arrested on Friday, September 22, Michele de Araújo Nogueira, 23, who is charged with apology of crime. She is accused of creating an Orkut community encouraging the theft of TV signals.

Her community was called Gatonet, a play on the word gato, which in Brazilian Portuguese is not only cat, but also a clandestine connection of any utility including gas, water, electricity, telephone or cable.

Nogueira was arrested by a new police agency known as the DRCI (Information Crimes Repression Bureau) upon arriving to work in a Travel Agency in Rio's Barra da Tijuca.

Gatonet (Cat-powered TV, according to a facetious motto), which had 222 members, presented itself as "a community dedicated to those who like to enjoy the benefits of cable TV, but don't want to pay for it".

The page still boasted: "The money that you save with Gatonet lets you buy popcorn and delight yourself with the schedule".