

Egypt Cuts Off All Access to Internet

First it was Twitter. Then Facebook. Next BlackBerry Internet service. Now, Egypt officials have reportedly cut off Internet access within its borders.

This follows Egypt's decision to ban demonstrations and arrest protesters who are angry with the government. Egyptians want President Hosni Mubarak to step down. The Egyptian people are demanding political, economic and social reforms. Egypt has responded to the protests with tear gas, rubber bullets, beatings and arrests.

And now by cutting off Internet access so the rest of the world can't see what's going on there-an action unprecedented in Internet history.

"Critical European-Asian fiber-optic routes through Egypt appear to be unaffected for now. But every Egyptian provider, every business, bank, Internet cafe, web site, school, embassy, and government office that relied on the big four Egyptian ISPs for their Internet connectivity is now cut off from the rest of the world," said James Cowie, chief technology officer at Internet monitoring firm Renesys. "Link Egypt, Vodafone/Raya, Telecom Egypt, Etisalat Misr, and all their customers and partners are, for the moment, off the air."

Renesys reports that virtually all of Egypt's Internet addresses are now unreachable, worldwide. This is a completely different situation from the modest Internet manipulation that took place in Tunisia, where specific routes were blocked, or Iran, where the Internet stayed up in a rate-limited form designed to make Internet connectivity painfully slow. The Egyptian government's actions tonight have essentially wiped

their country from the global map, Cowie said.

“What happens when you disconnect a modern economy and 80,000,000 people from the Internet? What will happen tomorrow, on the streets and in the credit markets?” Cowie asked. “This has never happened before, and the unknowns are piling up.” Renesys reports one exception: the Egyptian Stock Exchange.