

BBC NEWS

TECHNOLOGY

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Saudi Arabia opposes .gay internet domain name

Opposition to the creation of the internet address ending .gay has been voiced by Saudi Arabia.

Its Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) said the action would be "offensive" to some societies and cultures.

The authority has filed an official objection to the move with Icannc - the organisation overseeing the rollout of hundreds of new generic top-level domains (gTLD).

The Saudis also opposed other names.

Icann (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) revealed in June that it [had received 1,930 requests](#) for gTLD "strings" which could be used as an alternative to .com, .org or other current options.

Four different organisations are competing to run the .gay address system.

But before a decision is made, third-parties are given a chance to oppose the string's creation.

Icann's records show Saudi Arabia's CITC [has done so](#).

"Many societies and cultures consider homosexuality to be contrary to their culture, morality or religion," its submission said.

"The creation of a gTLD string which promotes homosexuality will be offensive to these societies and cultures. We respectfully request that Icannc refuse the application for this gTLD."

Criticising 'censorship'

The news dismayed UK-based campaigners.

"Sites under .gay would be carefully regulated and would not 'promote homosexuality' but offer crucial support," said a spokeswoman from The Lesbian and Gay Foundation.

"Arguably it is even more important for people living in countries such as Saudi Arabia where homosexuality is illegal and sometimes punishable by death to access this crucial support and lifeline."

Andy Wasley, from Stonewall, added: "Saudi Arabia already prevents its 1.9 million lesbian, gay and bisexual people from visiting community websites, like Stonewall's, that offer support and information. It's disappointing that it now wants to censor the internet for 420 million gay people worldwide."

List of objections

The .gay string is not the only gTLD that Saudi Arabia is opposing.

The country has also objected to:

.sex on the grounds it would increase the proliferation of pornographic material on the web.

.virgin, .sucks, .dating and .baby because they might also be used by pornographic sites.

.tattoo because the practice is contrary to religions "such as Islam and Judaism".

.wine and .vodka since they could glamourise the consumption of alcohol.

.africamagic because it "implies that it is linked to black magic and this is considered offensive".

Icann will continue to accept comments and objections to the proposed new gTLDs until 26 September.

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