

Facebook, Google, Twitter and other social networks will have to host web servers in India: Centre to SC



By [Tasneem Akolawala](#) on Sep 4, 2014 at 3:04 PM

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In a new development, the Centre has told the Supreme Court that social networking sites - including Facebook, Google and Twitter - will be asked to host servers in India so that authorities can keep tabs on objectionable content, [India Today](#) reports.

This directive was issued when the court was hearing a PIL filed by advocate Kamlesh Vaswani, who argued that though watching obscene videos was not an offense, the Centre should take steps to block around two crore porn sites as they are 'among the biggest reasons for the increase in crime against women and children.'

The government feels that online child abuse and sex crimes are all linked to pornography. Verbal abuse and sexual content are constantly shared on social networks, magnifying the damage. In the hearing, Justice Kurein Joseph, expressed his opinion and said that easily accessible porn sites were polluting young minds and were the reason behind the rising sexual abuse of children and women.

The Supreme Court has left the Centre to decide on the pornography ban after Internet Service Providers (ISPs) threw up their hands, saying they could not do this on their own and would require a direction from the telecom ministry or the court.

Representing the Centre, Additional Solicitor General L Nageswara Rao, felt that getting some control on social networks could also help cushion the damage. Rao, told a three-judge bench, "We wish to have some control over the content of social networking sites but the hurdle is that all of them are headquartered overseas and content uploading is done abroad. There are jurisdictional issues. So we are planning to ask these sites to have a server in India too so that we can scan them."

Rao will take up the issue with the newly formed Cyber Regulatory Advisory Committee at an upcoming scheduled meeting.

Talking about sexual abuse on women and children, [The Independent recently](#)

reported that a new breed of social media websites – like ask.fm, qooh.me and formspring.me – are leaving young people open to cyber bullying, with anonymous users able to bombard others with sexually explicit messages and demands. The anonymity provided by the sites has made them a hotbed for sexual pressure, bullying and abuse.

Cyber expert and apex court lawyer Pavan Duggal endorsed the idea of setting up servers in India. He told India Today, “Making overseas-headquartered sites set up a server in India is essential to protect sovereign rights. It helps in removal of undesirable, illegal and unwarranted content and we can prevent undesirable data on Indians from being illegally transferred outside the country’s territorial boundaries.”

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