

**Why Sarawak Report remains largely accessible despite MCMC block**  
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**By Ram Anand**

Sarawak Report's website still remains accessible in Malaysia because the block imposed by local Internet regulators is typically more effective on mobile networks, an IT expert with the Sinar Project non-governmental group said.

Despite the Malaysian Multimedia and Communications Commission (MCMC) blocking the whistleblower site on Sunday evening, many readers said they were able to access it, even without consciously tweaking settings to circumvent the censoring.

There is more difficulty, however, in accessing the website through mobile phone networks.

"If you are talking about laptops and desktops, such blocks are not that effective," said Khairil Yusof, co-founder of Sinar Project, an Internet rights group that uses open-source technology to promote accountability and better governance.

Sarawak Report has been publishing exposes on alleged wrongdoings in 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), and implicated several individuals, including tycoon Low Taek Jho and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who is 1MDB's founder and advisory board chairman.

The move to block it on Sunday was on grounds that the content was false and to "maintain national stability".

But MCMC in itself does not have the technical ability to block websites and would normally relay such requests to local Internet Services Providers (ISP), Khairil said.

ISPs normally comply with MCMC orders to block access to websites requested, but this move is only fully effective on a mobile network -- the 3G and 4G connections issued by telco companies in Malaysia, he said.

"In a mobile phone, you can't really change the settings to circumvent a block. It's very difficult. And normally, the Domain Names System (DNS) that is assigned to your mobile is the one provided by your carrier, no matter where you are accessing it from," Khairil said.

But on laptops and desktops, these settings not only can be changed, but the DNS assigned to devices on its own are not locally based, hence rendering the block ineffective.

"Even if you are talking about Telekom Malaysia (TM), using their service does not mean you get a DNS from them. Sometimes, you get a DNS assigned by Google itself, and thus you can access," he said.

Khairil said that most corporate offices or large networks, such as ones existing in organisations, have Google or DNS from other sources assigned to connected devices.

"Sometimes, even if your wireless router is bought from somewhere else, then you might not get a TM DNS but instead it will assign a different DNS to your system," he said.

"Blocking is a much more difficult process on the larger networks," he added.

MCMC has not indicated how long the block on Sarawak Report will last.

Going to its URL at [www.sarawakreport.org](http://www.sarawakreport.org) now returns a notice by MCMC that the site is not available in Malaysia as it violates national law.

Since Sunday, the site's administrators have moved it to mirror sites such as [www.sarawak-report.org](http://www.sarawak-report.org), which is now also blocked. But its contents can still be accessed on another mirror site with a different URL.

Putrajaya's censoring of the site has drawn criticism, with many saying it was ineffective given the many ways to circumvent it, and would ultimately erode the government's credibility further. – July 22, 2015.

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