

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/arabie-saoudite-a-new-agency-to-censor-youtube-16-12-2013,45626.html>

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Middle East/North Africa - Saudi Arabia

More censorship?

## A new agency to censor YouTube, other video sites?

16 December 2013

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According to a [report](#) in the Saudi newspaper Al-Hayat, the head of the Commission for Audiovisual Media, Dr. Riyadh Najem, [announced](#) at a meeting with businessmen and journalists on 1 December that he plans to create a new agency [to monitor and censor](#) video content on YouTube and other sites.

The Al-Hayat report said that Saudis who want to share videos online would have to obtain a permit from this new agency, which would be overseen by Najem's commission. Only YouTube use compatible with Saudi "culture, values and tradition" would be permitted, the article said.

Najem has since expressed strong criticism of the Al-Hayat story, which was published on 2 December, but has stopped short of denying what it reported.

"Although already monitored and censored, the Internet has been one of the few spaces where Saudis could express views and share content but this announcement, if confirmed, would yet again show that the Saudi authorities are bent on eliminating all space for freedom and gagging civil society," Reporters Without Borders said.

"We urge the authorities to abandon this repressive measure and all of their other policies of systematic website content censorship, and instead to respect freedom of expression and information."

The [plan](#) for the new agency reported by Al-Hayat has attracted [a great deal of criticism](#) from Saudi citizens on social networks.

In a [letter](#) to Al-Hayat that the newspaper published on 4 December, Najem said the report contain many inaccuracies but he did not deny that his commission intended to create a "tool for protecting young Saudis and making them aware of what is acceptable for Saudi society and culture."

As the traditional Saudi media are subservient to the authorities, the Internet, and YouTube in particular, has become the preferred space for Saudis to debate the problems that plague their society. According to [Reuters](#), Saudi Arabia has [more YouTube users per capita than any other country in the world](#).

In 2011, the authorities adopted a number of measures designed to deter the Saudi public from obtaining information about the popular uprisings in other Arab countries and participating in the surge in online activity throughout the Arab world.

These measures have been enforced with determination ever since in order to restrict the flow of news and information and throttle any political or social demands.

Saudi Arabia is on the Reporters Without Borders list of countries that are ["Enemies of the Internet."](#)

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