

## **Could Turkey's Twitter ban push citizens to Namecoin?**

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan recently banned Twitter in Turkey after the network refused to remove tweets linking to incriminating recordings and documents directly involving him. After vehemently denying the validity of these documents, Erdogan announced on March 20 that following a court order, Twitter would be disabled in the country. "We'll eradicate Twitter," he said. "I don't care what the international community says. Everyone will witness the power of the Turkish Republic."

This resulted in what's been referred to by Forbes as the Streisand effect, whereby an effort to cover something up backfires by drawing even more attention to it. Since the ban, Hotspot Shield has seen a massive jump in downloads in Turkey, and is still the most popular free app on both the iOS and Android app stores. The app provides a VPN allowing users to browse the net anonymously through servers primarily based in the U.S.

Twitter responded to Erdogan's announcement by posting details of how Turks could tweet via text message, so they don't need to access the Twitter site or have an internet connection to be heard. After finding the Twitter site redirecting to a government page, many Turks began using Twitter through a Google DNS, this worked for a while before Erdogan blocked that too. The situation is starting to look a bit like a game of cat and mouse and while most Turks are hoping the government will eventually back off, they're clearly prepared to do whatever it takes to get complete access to the net.

In the past few months, VPN services such as Spotflux have reported that Pakistani governments were attempting to block their services, so it is possible for Erdogan to directly target providers like Hotspot Shield for example if he wants to take this further.

For this reason, now and in the future it will become increasingly important for people to start using decentralized DNS servers. The cryptocurrency Namecoin provides just the sort of framework required. Unlike most digital currencies, Namecoin's primary value proposition is not in its exchange potential. While the currency (NMC) is a direct Bitcoin derivative and can be traded, Namecoin positions itself as the secure alternative for uncensored internet usage by providing a decentralized domain name system for the global top level domain ".bit". It allows users to create new sites and transfer existing ones onto .bit domains. These domains are far more difficult for authorities to block and can therefore play a major role in situations where the government is trying to censor parts of the web.

It's impossible to access .bit domains without either a Firefox or Chrome plugin. This may be both an advantage and a disadvantage for Namecoin as users have more hoops to jump through in order to use it. But solutions such as the Firefox plugin FreeSpeechMe integrates a number of powerful features that make the process of finding .bit sites easy, seamless and secure.

We're no longer living in a world where governments can show such blatant disregard for their citizens' rights and get away with it. If Erdogan is willing to shut down massive networks like Twitter, he certainly won't think twice about killing sites that aim to disseminate information about corruption in his cabinet. Sites registered in the .bit domain are far more resistant to this shameless abuse of power. Whether or not Turks are willing and able to start using Namecoin and .bit domains

to preserve their internet freedoms, it's important for the crypto community to encourage these sorts of projects.