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iTunes Blocked by “Great Firewall of China”

The compilation, entitled *Songs for Tibet — The Art of Peace*, compiled by the pro-Tibet Art of Peace Foundation, features songs from 20 artists, including Sting and Alanis Morissette. According to the Art of Peace Foundation, the album was to be given away for free to Olympic athletes.

Though confirmation is lacking, it is thought that the release of the album on iTunes triggered the so-called "Great Firewall of China" to swing into action and block Chinese Web browsers from accessing the music service. Baffled users turned to the iTunes support forum for answers to the connection error they were receiving.



Describing the situation to Reuters, Danny Levinson, CEO of a digital direct-marketing company in Shanghai, noted that the core URL "seems to be stopped on the China side" but worked when accessed from abroad. According to one of Apple's technical-support representatives, Apple was not denying access to Chinese users.

"The possibility of a block is high, and I'd say it should be due to a content issue," Liu Bin, associate director of the Beijing consulting firm BDA, told Reuters after he tried to connect to the iTunes site.

This would not be the first time the Chinese government, through its "Great Firewall," blocked Internet access to content it deemed objectionable. In some particularly egregious cases, the Chinese government has even received aid from American companies for its effort to restrict activities online.

In one case China was able to track down an anonymous blogger who posted material online challenging Beijing's authoritarian rule. The blogger, Wang Xiaoning, was identified with the help of Yahoo!, the pioneering American Internet directory and search engine. As a result, Wang was arrested and tortured by Chinese authorities. He was convicted in 2003 of charges of "incitement to subvert state power" and received a jail sentence of 10 years.



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