

Anonymous' call for protest draws few supporters in Singapore

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Despite calls by hacktivists for Singaporeans to mount a virtual Nov 5 protest against new Internet regulations, the day passed with few backing Anonymous' call to black out their Facebook profile pictures or dress in red and black.

The police put up a warning against assembling without a permit on their Facebook page at about 8.15pm and said they had received information that some individuals might be planning one last night.

It was relatively quiet online, though the YouTube account for Ah Boys To Men actor Ridhwan Azman appeared to have been hacked, with a video message showing a masked man threatening retaliation for his "dissing the legion".

"I don't know of any government websites being hacked, so perhaps this is going for one of the lower-hanging fruits," said co-chair of the Cyber Security Awareness Alliance, Ms Shirley Wong.

Most major online websites, including The Online Citizen, Public House and TR Emeritus, which opposed the regulations, did not black out their Facebook profiles.

The Online Citizen said it did not condone Anonymous' tactics. "While we will continue to push for the repeal of the licensing regime, we refuse to implicitly or explicitly condone intentional violations of the law which are calculated to sabotage and disrupt Internet services which innocent third parties rely on for data," said managing editor Choo Zheng Xi.

Experts said the lack of response indicated a rejection of covert and subversive tactics to push for policy changes.

Said arts, culture and media research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, Dr Carol Soon: "Other than credibility issues due to the organisers' anonymity, Anonymous' mission may be perceived as promoting chaos. This threatens law and order, which is valued by many Singaporeans."

Last Thursday, someone claiming to be from the global hacker group threatened in a YouTube video to bring down Singapore government infrastructure in a show of protest against licensing regulations for online sites. He urged a protest on Nov 5, which is Guy Fawkes' Day.

Elsewhere, there were protests.

In Manila, some 100 masked members of Anonymous Philippines marched on parliament, denouncing corruption and pledging more cyber attacks, a week after 30 government websites were hit.

The protesters, wearing masks, faced off with dozens of riot police outside the House of Representatives in suburban Quezon city, north of Manila, Agence France-Presse reported.

In Australia, as well, websites have been hacked by those claiming to be from the Anonymous collective.

Additional reporting by Maryam Mokhtar