

Innocent iPads Detained by Israeli Customs



Yesterday, global media sources were abuzz with news that Israel has [banned imports of the Apple iPad](#) [1], citing concerns that the unit's wireless frequencies are not compatible with national standards.

American WiFi standards permit broadcasting at a higher power than European standards; Israeli standards mirror those of Europe. In a recent interview, Eden Bar Tal, director of the Communications Ministry, claimed that the ministry's sole concern was to make sure that the iPad's wireless technology does not interfere with the wireless connections of other Israeli users.

Critics, however, have been quick to point out that the concerns of the Israeli Communications Ministry might not be as noble as they'd like you to believe.

An Israeli news blogger points out that while the WiFi chipset used in the iPad is relatively new and rare in WiFi devices, it is the same chipset used in the newer versions of iPhone and iPod Touch — both sold in Israel by iDigital, the company that owns Apple's Israeli distribution rights.

Interestingly, Israel's ban on iPad imports came a day after Apple announced that its international launch of iPads is [delayed until May 10th](#) [2]. Read: iDigital can't sell iPads for another month; meaning the only way Israelis can get their hands on iPads, is to import units from the U.S. iDigital will be selling iPads to Israelis at a higher price point than U.S. Apple customers are paying.

But perhaps it's not all about money. In regards to the iPad ban, a senior deputy director for the Communications Ministry told the Associate Press, "without regulation, you would have chaos." This director may have unintentionally revealed a much bigger issue.

Israel's ban on the iPad is a somewhat frivolous way of bringing up a much more serious debate — that of international regulation of wireless communications. Each country has its own wireless network regulations, and varying regulatory agencies controlling telecommunications. Logically, in order to prevent fractured networks, global cooperation is essential. Over the past few years the controversy between

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communication standards — especially in the U.S. and European Union — has been a sticking point for telecommunications.

Israel's roundabout way of taking a stance on wireless regulation standards might only be muddying the waters of what's really important. This reminds me of last year's PETA campaign to re-brand fish as "sea-kittens." PETA's message: stop eating sea-kittens because they are adorable. Since linguistics clearly does not fall under the jurisdiction of animal rights activists, it was fairly obvious that PETA didn't think it would actually get people to use the term "sea-kitten" in place of "seafood." Instead, the sea-kitten campaign was a veiled media stunt aimed to draw attention to a bigger issue — PETA's opposition to commercial and farm fishing, and the practices of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Like the iPad ban, PETA lead people to the conclusion the organization desired, but took a somewhat ridiculous path in getting there, muddling what is actually the real issue.

For now, the fate of iPads in Israel is in limbo — and the bigger issue of global wireless regulation still looms. In the meantime, you can rest easy if your iPad has been confiscated — Israeli customs are charging a daily storage fee to ensure your iPad's utmost safety.

What do you think? Is Israel taking its regulation too far? Send me your thoughts at Karen.Langhauser@advantagemedia.com [3].

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