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Bloggers Promise to Boycott Yves Rocher

By Oleg Sukhov

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Bloggers and activists launched a campaign to boycott French cosmetics producer Yves Rocher after the firm filed a complaint against Glavnoye Podpisnoye Agentstvo, a courier company linked to opposition leader Alexei Navalny and his brother Oleg.

Dozens of people flocked to Yves Rocher Russia's Facebook page Wednesday and Thursday. They criticized or mocked the company for what they consider participation in political repression, and they pledged not to buy its products.

When the cosmetics giant posted a picture of a tree and asked Facebook users what kind of tree it is, some quipped that it is the Judas tree, while others said it was a tree near the Lubyanka, the seat of the Federal Security Service.

Some respondents jokingly urged all Yves Rocher employees to join United Russia.

The company also asked Facebook users what their “winter must-have” in cosmetics was. Among the most popular answers were “a false report against an innocent person,” “write a politically motivated report against Navalny,” and “complete absence of Yves Rocher products at home.”

Meanwhile, journalist and blogger Andrei Malgin posted a fake advertisement for Yves Rocher featuring the face of Investigative Committee Chairman Alexander Bastrykin surrounded by lotions and cleansers.

Journalist Irek Murtazin wrote on his blog Wednesday that he had sent a letter to Yves Rocher’s press office in France saying that the company’s Russian branch was taking part in a politically motivated case against innocent people. He urged everyone to e-mail similar letters to Yves Rocher’s headquarters.

Another blogger posted a long list of e-mail addresses to which such letters can be sent.

Yves Rocher confirmed on Facebook in December that it had filed the complaint “in order to protect its economic interests.”

On Thursday, the company addressed the issue again.

“At the moment, we cannot comment on issues connected with Glavnoye Podpisnoye Agentstvo because that will be possible only when the investigation is completed,” Yves Rocher said in a Facebook post. “We respect every person’s personal opinion and give everyone an opportunity to express them on our page without commenting on their opinions, regardless of our attitude toward them and of the current situation.”

The company said it was deleting only those comments that insulted the firm and its employees.

Novaya Gazeta on Tuesday posted scans of a complaint by Bruno Leproux, CEO of Yves Rocher’s Russian unit, filed with the Investigative Committee against Glavnoye Podpisnoye Agentstvo.

Leprou said in the complaint that the courier company could have caused damage to Yves Rocher by persuading it to conclude an unfavorable contract for the delivery of its products, Novaya Gazeta reported. Under the contract, Yves Rocher could not use the services of alternative providers or revise the prices, the report said.

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