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VKontakte Founder Supports Ukraine Protest, Says Authorities Wanted $100,000 Bribe

By The Moscow Times

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The St. Petersburg-based entrepreneur's profile picture on VKontakte. **Pavel Durov**

VKontakte founder Pavel Durov accused the Ukrainian authorities of trying to extort a $100,000 bribe from him for returning the computer servers they had confiscated from his social network this summer.

The servers haven't been returned yet, and no cogent reason for seizing them has been provided, Durov wrote on his VKontakte page Sunday.

"Officially, Ukrainian bureaucrats have changed the reason for confiscating our servers several times," he said. "Unofficially, Ukrainian bureaucrats demanded a $100,000 bribe to return our equipment to us."

Durov, whose network is more popular than Facebook in Russia and other parts of the former

Soviet Union, added that the confiscation of the servers has deprived Ukrainian Internet users of quick access to VKontakte and has cost the Ukrainian economy "millions of dollars in potential investments."

The tech entrepreneur also said he hoped the ongoing protests in Ukraine over the government's U-turn on a European association deal would lead to "positive changes" in the way the country is run.

"It is obvious that these wonderful people deserves a higher intellectual and moral standard from their rulers," he said.

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