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Facebook Blocks Kadyrov's Accounts Over U.S. Sanctions

December 27, 2017



Ramzan Kadyrov (Mikhail Metzel / TASS)

Facebook has confirmed that it blocked Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov's social media accounts because of human rights sanctions the United States imposed on him last week.

Kadyrov complained on Friday that his popular Facebook and Facebook-owned Instagram accounts had been blocked. Two days earlier, he was placed on the U.S. Magnitsky list for allegedly orchestrating human rights abuses including torture and murder in Russia's Muslim-majority North Caucasus republic.

Related article: Chechen Leader Ramzan Kadyrov Laughs Off U.S. Sanctions

Facebook's press service told the Vedomosti business daily on Wednesday that it had a "legal obligation to deactivate the individual's accounts" after confirming he was on the list of U.S. sanctions.

Kadyrov said he would remain on the popular Russian social network VKontakte and Twitter. Chechen deputies have reportedly quit Instagram in solidarity with their leader.

Russia's telecommunications watchdog sent an official inquiry to Facebook over the blocked accounts, while Russian Communications Minister Nikolai Nikiforov decried the move as hypocritical, the Interfax news agency reported.

"We cannot be unconcerned by such actions," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was cited as saying by Vedomosti.

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