The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Tech Firms Rebuke Regulator Over Telegram Ban

April 27, 2018



Pixabay / MT

Russian tech firms swept up in the state regulator's campaign to block the Telegram messaging service have voiced concerns and taken steps toward keeping the app accessible.

State media watchdog Roskomnadzor has blocked almost 18 million IP addresses since April 16 in an attempt to force Telegram out of Russia, disrupting countless unrelated online services.

News emerged overnight that Roskomnadzor had temporarily blacklisted the IP addresses of Twitter, Facebook, as well as Russian search engine Yandex and social media website VKontakte.

Related article: Twitter, Facebook Blacklisted in Russia's Telegram Ban

“We don’t consider this situation normal,” Interfax quoted Yandex spokesman Ochir Mandzhikov as saying. “Restricting access to global and Russian internet services will primarily harm the Russian Internet.”

“It is the lack of freedom and lack of choice for users that we consider the most dangerous outcome of the bans,” Mandzhikov said.

VKontakte CEO Andrei Rogozov called the major disruptions caused by Roskomnadzor’s efforts “a lack of understanding of the principles of the modern internet.”

“Providing any keys or gaining access to information beyond the device is impossible by definition,” Rogozov wrote on his page, reiterating Telegram founder and CEO Pavel Durov’s assertions that the messaging app cannot, in fact, access users’ encrypted messages.

Related article: Telegram Founder Pledges Millions to Fight Russian 'Political Censorship'

Durov called for a “Digital Resistance” after Russian courts ordered the ban of Telegram, citing its "refusal" to grant the security services access to users’ encrypted messages. The messaging app has an estimated 15 million Russian users.

VKontakte’s owner Mail.ru Group published a series of IP addresses to access Telegram on Friday, which were immediately criticized as unreliable by leading figures who track the regulators’ ongoing ban.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has acknowledged the major disruptions, saying Roskomnadzor’s pursuit of Telegram “must not interfere with other services,” state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported.

“The process of restricting access to Telegram perhaps turned out to be more difficult than previously thought, but that doesn’t mean that the court’s decision shouldn’t be enforced,” Peskov added the day after admitting that he still uses Telegram.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2018/04/27/russian-tech-firms-rebuke-regulator-over-telegram-ban-a61287