The Moscow Times
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VKontakte Introduces Private Profiles Amid Wave of Extremism Prosecutions

August 31, 2018

Alexei Zotov / TASS

Russia's VKontakte social media network will allow users to control the privacy of their profiles following a growing number of extremism prosecutions targeting social media users.

VKontakte, which has been accused of cooperation with authorities to hand over social media content and aid prosecutions, announced new privacy measures this month to protect users from what its CEO called "unjustified persecution," and its parent company called on the authorities to pardon those convicted of extremism for comments or images.

"Now you can make your profile fully private at once and protect your private space from strangers," VKontakte announced on Friday.

Visitors who are not friends with a user will only be able to see their name and photo on a private profile, in addition to other basic information including age, hometown and work, VKontakte said.

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Additionally, people who shared or reposted an original post will only be visible to the manager of a particular page.

VKontakte CEO Andrei Rogozov said his company is drafting a "detailed section" on its policy toward sharing user data with the authorities.

"Although we began to react to this problem rather late, we're actively moving along the charted plan," Rogozov he wrote in a post on his VKontakte page Friday.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2018/08/31/vkontakte-introduces-private-profiles-amid-wave-of-extremism-prosecutions-a62743