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Russia Orders Facebook to Remove Photos of Swastika Flag

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Russia's media regulator has ordered Facebook and Instagram to remove images that it said were disrespectful of the Russian flag from their platforms.

This appears to be the first case of a foreign entity being pressured to comply with Russia's new law that bans the disrespect of state symbols and the authorities. To date, only Russian news outlets and individuals have been fined or forced to take down information under the law.

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Russia's media watchdog Roskomnadzor said Monday that it had placed Facebook on a government registry of banned information over a picture of a swastika in front of the Russian flag and "an obscene interpretation of our country's name."

Facebook is still accessible in Russia as of Tuesday afternoon.

Roskomnadzor issued the same sternly worded statement to Instagram, owned by Facebook, over the same image on Tuesday.

“The picture contains an image of lewd actions with the Russian state flag,” it said.

In both cases, Roskomnadzor said the Russian General Prosecutor’s Office had demanded to remove the offending image.

A similar “indecent image” in front of the Russian flag was deleted from Russia’s popular Vkontakte social media network last week, Roskomnadzor said at the time.

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