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Russia's Yandex.Taxi Admits to Sharing Riders' Location With Police

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Yandex.Taxi confirmed that it provides its customers' ride histories and maintained that the company is legally bound to comply with requests from authorities. **Elena Yastrebova / Flickr Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)**

Russian tech giant Yandex's taxi service shares passengers' ride history with law enforcement authorities, according to the testimony of an ex-policeman on trial for wrongfully detaining an investigative journalist.

Igor Lyakhovets was among the several police officers who had arrested journalist Ivan Golunov on drug charges in June 2019. An unprecedented public outcry led to Golunov's release within a week and the officers' eventual arrest for abuse of powers months later.

Related article: Russia's Yandex.Taxi Likely to Sell New Shares, Says Top Shareholder

Lyakhovets testified that he had obtained Golunov's home address from his ride history provided by Yandex.Taxi, according to an account published Saturday by the Baza news

website.

Yandex.Taxi confirmed that it provides its customers' ride histories and maintained that the company is legally bound to comply with requests from authorities. The ride-hailing service declined to specify whether it had shared Golunov's ride history.

"We know from experience that providing this information is key to solving crimes and sometimes helps save lives," spokeswoman Natalya Rozhkova told the Mediazona news website Monday.

The news comes weeks after Russia's The Bell news website reported that the Federal Security Service (FSB) ordered the country's major internet companies to give it continuous access to their systems last year. The orders affect more than 200 Russian internet services, including some Yandex services, which can be blocked for failing to comply.

Critics have accused the Russian government of censorship as it has stepped up internet regulations in recent years.

The expert community was divided over the legality of Yandex.Taxi's actions.

The internet freedom website Roskomsvoboda argued that Yandex.Taxi had the right to ignore Lyakhovets' request for Golunov's ride history.

Golunov suggested that Lyakhovets submitted the request by email instead of through official channels. Yandex.Taxi spokesman Vladimir Isayev later wrote that it was an officially filed request.

Russian law requires companies to turn over information if they receive an official request from the authorities.

Yandex.Taxi is said to be considering an initial public offering (IPO).

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