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Facebook Pays Russia $50K Fine For Not Localizing User Data

The social network has refused to comply with Russia's controversial requirements to store Russian users' data on Russia-based servers.

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Russian fined Facebook and Twitter earlier this year. **Anthony Quintano / Flickr (CC BY 2.0)**

Facebook has paid Russian authorities a 4 million ruble ($53,000) fine over its refusal to comply with controversial data localization laws.

Under laws which came into force in 2016, Russia requires all foreign technology companies to store data related to their Russian customers and users on servers located inside Russia. Campaigners saw the law as an attempt by Russia to exert more control over the country's relatively free online space.

Authorities previously blocked Microsoft-owned LinkedIn for refusing to comply.

A Moscow court said Thursday that Facebook had paid the fine, which was levied in February, and that proceedings against the U.S. technology giant have been dropped, Russian state-run news agencies reported. Russian authorities started proceedings against both Facebook and Twitter in 2018. The companies responded by questioning the regulations and were separately fined a symbolic 3,000 rubles ($40) for failing to comply with rules on sharing user data with law enforcement.

Taken alongside rules which require Russian technology companies to share encryption data with the FSB and orders for mobile phone operators to keep records of user calls and text messages, civil society groups have raised concerns about Russia's feared security apparatus gaining unfettered back-door access to Russians' personal data which could then be used to harass critics and opponents.

Apple and Google have complied with the data localization laws.

The 4 million ruble fine represents less than 90 seconds' worth of profit for Facebook, which has set new record highs for earnings this year on the back of coronavirus lockdowns around the world.

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