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Russia Fines Google for Failing To Remove Banned Content

By AFP

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The maximum fine for the offense under Russian law is 5 million rubles. **Thomas Hawk / Flickr (CC BY-NC 2.0)**

A Moscow court fined Google on Thursday for not taking down online content banned by the Russian authorities, the latest in a series of escalating penalties against the U.S. tech giant.

Google was found guilty of repeatedly failing to delete search results "containing information prohibited in Russia" and was fined 3 million rubles (around $41,000), state communications watchdog Roskomnadzor said.

Roskomnadzor said Google was only partially compliant with current laws, noting that on average 30 percent of links to banned extremist or pornographic material or content related to suicide was not taken down.

The state-run Interfax news agency said Thursday's ruling was the fourth such recent fine

against Google over its failure to hide banned content.

In 2018, Russia fined Google 500,000 rubles (around $6,800) in particular for failing to remove calls for demonstrations from opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

In 2019, Google was fined 700,000 rubles for a repeat offense, and the Russian authorities earlier this year also handed Google a penalty of 1.5 million rubles over the same issue.

The Kremlin has in recent years ramped up controls over the internet, ostensibly to fight extremism.

But government critics have denounced official oversight of the web as a means to stifle debate and silence dissent.

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