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Apple Faces Anti-Telegram Lawsuit Following U.S. Capitol Riot

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Telegram messaging app has gained popularity in Russian-speaking countries. **Alexander Shcherbak / TASS**

A U.S. NGO has sued Apple in federal court in a bid to remove secure messaging app Telegram from its App Store, claiming the app fails to filter out far-right extremist activity.

Telegram's downloads soared last week after Twitter and Facebook banned U.S. President Donald Trump's accounts and Google and Apple removed conservative social network Parler from their app stores in the wake of the violent storming of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6.

The lawsuit, filed Sunday in the U.S. District Court of Northern California by the Coalition for a Safer Web, says Telegram did not take adequate action against users who shared messages containing extremist statements and calls for violence following the riot, thus violating the App Store's terms of use.

"CSW initiated a public call to action urging Congress and other social media watchdogs to place pressure on Telegram's management to impose reasonable constraints on the

application's use by white supremacist, anti-Semitic extremist groups, including Proud Boys, Boogaloo Bois, QAnon supporters and extremist groups based in Russia and Europe inciting violence against Jews and black Americans," the group said in a press release.

The NGO said it plans to file a similar lawsuit against Google to remove Telegram from Google Play.

The lawsuit is likely to attract criticism from both pro-Kremlin and opposition voices within Russia, who also voiced condemnation after the U.S. tech giants took actions against Trump and his supporters following the Capitol riot.

Telegram was co-founded by Russian tech entrepreneur Pavel Durov as a messaging app for users who sought digital privacy. While the app has enjoyed popularity in Russian-speaking countries and Iran, Durov himself had to leave Russia after clashing with the authorities.

However, the app has attracted criticism for serving as a haven for extremist groups banned from other apps.

Russia itself unsuccessfully tried to ban Telegram from operating on Russian territory, finally lifting its ban on the app last year.

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