

Russia Demands Explanation From Facebook Over Blocked Accounts

By [AFP](#)

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Facebook said the deceptive activity was traced only to "individuals operating within Russia." **SOPA Images via ZUMA Wire / TASS**

Russia on Thursday demanded an explanation from Facebook after the social media giant said it had derailed a campaign to mislead Russians protesting the arrest of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

The U.S.-based social network said its automated systems detected and disabled 530 Instagram accounts being used in the campaign against protesters who took to the streets in Russia following Navalny's arrest in mid-January.

"Roskomnadzor has sent Facebook management a letter containing a request to provide lists of accounts to which access has been limited and also to explain the reasons for blocking them," the Russian communications watchdog said.

Roskomnadzor demanded that Facebook, which owns the image-centric service, also provide proof that the blocked accounts had been involved in "illegal activities."

Related article: [Facebook Derails Russian Effort to Mislead Pro-Navalny Protesters](#)

The network of Instagram accounts used hashtag and location "poisoning" typically associated with spam or financial scams to drown out posts by protesters, according to Facebook global threat disruption lead David Agranovich.

Some of the Instagram posts suggested people got Covid-19 and died as a result of attending protests, according to samples provided by Facebook.

Facebook reported that 55,000 people followed one or more of the Instagram accounts.

Tens of thousands of opposition supporters took to the streets in January and February to protest Navalny's arrest and President Vladimir Putin's two-decade rule.

Navalny was sentenced last month to two and a half years in a penal colony for breaching parole terms while in Germany recovering from a poisoning attack Novichok nerve agent.

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