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Russia Threatens to Block Twitter Within 30 Days

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Russia says Twitter has failed to take down over 3,000 posts containing banned information. **Andrew Gombert / EPA / TASS**

Russia will block Twitter within a month if it fails to delete banned content, authorities told state media Tuesday.

Vadim Subbotin, the deputy chief of Russia's state communications watchdog Roskomnadzor, issued the warning a week after the country began slowing down the social media platform's speed over the dispute. The agency acted amid tensions with western social media platforms over what Moscow calls censorship against its state-affiliated accounts.

Related article: Russia Disrupts Twitter Access in Banned Content Row

"We've taken a month to watch Twitter's reaction on the issue of removing prohibited information. Appropriate decisions will be made depending on the social network administration's actions," the state-run TASS news agency quoted Subbotin as saying.

“If Twitter doesn’t comply with Roskomnadzor and Russian legislation’s requirements, then we will consider the issue of completely blocking the service in Russia,” he warned.

The watchdog says the banned content at the center of the conflict involves more than 3,000 posts containing information about suicide, child pornography and drugs that apparently remained online since 2017. Polls say a mere 3% of Russians use Twitter.

Experts interviewed by The Moscow Times called Russia's announcement that it would disrupt Twitter access unprecedented but noted that it was unclear how it would be carried out.

The Kremlin on Wednesday defended Roskomnadzor’s actions toward Twitter as an attempt to force the social platform to follow Russian law, which it “demonstrably violates.”

President Vladimir Putin last month raised fines for social media giants accused of “discriminating” against Russian media. On New Year’s Eve, he granted Roskomnadzor the power to block social media platforms if they are found to “discriminate” against Russian media.

Putin accused social media giants in January of “controlling society” and “restricting the right to freely express viewpoints.”

Russia previously banned the social networking website LinkedIn for failing to store users’ data on Russian servers and, more recently, reversed a decision to ban the Telegram messaging app after a two-year attempt to block it.

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