

Russia Orders Foreign Tech Giants to Set Up Local Foothold

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Internet companies that don't open an office in Russia could end up fully blocked within the country.
Zuma / TASS

Russian President Vladimir Putin [signed](#) a law Thursday forcing foreign internet companies to set up local offices after authorities accused them of interference by not deleting Russian users' calls for protests.

Starting Jan. 1, 2022, internet companies with a daily base of more than half a million Russian users will be required to establish a legal presence in the country.

Failure to open a Russian office will result in penalties ranging from an advertising ban to being fully blocked in the country.

Related article: [Russia Says Won't Block Twitter, Will Keep Throttling Speeds](#)

President Vladimir Putin signed the law “on the activities of foreign persons on the internet

within Russian territory” as Moscow courts continued issuing multimillion-dollar fines against Google, Facebook, Twitter and TikTok for failing to delete banned content.

Lawmakers have identified a total of 20 companies that are subject to demands to go local, including YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram and Telegram.

The IT giants are accused of leaving up posts promoting anti-government demonstrations that swept Russia in January when Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny was jailed upon his return from poisoning recovery abroad.

Russia has ramped up its campaign against social media giants this year, sparking concerns among Kremlin critics that the authorities are working to clamp down on outlets for dissent.

Authorities also began slowing down Twitter’s service speeds in the spring, claiming it had not deleted banned content that includes child pornography, drug use and calls for minors to commit suicide.

Putin earlier this year criticized the mostly Western platforms for becoming so influential that they “compete” with sovereign states. On Wednesday, he accused foreign social media platforms of ignoring Russian laws but insisted that Russian authorities do not plan to block them.

“We tell them ‘you are distributing child pornography, instructions on how to make Molotov cocktails and suicide, you must remove that’,” Putin said at his annual call-in show.

“But they just don’t listen to us. This is wrong.”

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