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Russia Fines Google Again for Not Removing Banned Content

By AFP

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A Moscow court fined Google on Tuesday for failing to remove content banned in Russia, news agencies reported, the latest in a series of escalating penalties against the U.S. tech giant.

Russia in recent months has been taking legal action against foreign tech companies for not deleting content banned by the authorities, including pornographic material or posts deemed extremist or condoning drugs or suicide.

On Tuesday the Tagansky district court slapped Google with five separate fines totaling 14 million rubles ($190,000, 163,000 euros) for the violation, the RIA Novosti news agency reported, citing the court's press service.

The U.S. company was fined 6 million rubles for the same charge at the end of May and 3 million rubles in December.

Russia routinely fines Western tech companies for failing to comply with its legislation.

Last month the Tagansky district court found Google guilty of breaching data localization laws and fined the company 3 million rubles.

It was the first time the U.S. company was penalized for violating the controversial law passed in 2014 that requires the personal data of Russian users to be stored inside Russia.

But Moscow has ramped up the pressure on foreign social media companies in recent months in particular after accusing them last winter of not removing posts calling for minors to join protests in support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

Facebook has been handed fines for failing to remove illegal content, while Twitter has had its service speeds in Russia throttled.

In recent years, the Russian government has also been tightening control over the internet under the pretext of fighting extremism and protecting minors.

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

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