The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Facebook Eases Rules to Allow Violent Speech Against 'Russian Invaders'

By AFP

March 11, 2022

"We still won't allow credible calls for violence against Russian civilians," Meta said. **Andre M. Chang/ZUMA Press Wire/TASS**

Facebook said Thursday that due to the invasion of Ukraine it has temporarily eased its rules regarding violent speech to allow statements like "death to Russian invaders," but not credible threats against civilians.

Moscow's internationally condemned invasion of its neighbor has provoked unprecedented sanctions from Western governments and businesses, but also a surge of online anger.

"As a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we have temporarily made allowances for forms of political expression that would normally violate our rules like violent speech such as 'death to the Russian invaders,'" Facebook's parent company Meta said in a statement.

"We still won't allow credible calls for violence against Russian civilians," it added.

Facebook made its statement after a Reuters report, citing the firm's emails to its content moderators, which said the policy applies to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia and Ukraine.

Facebook and other US tech giants have moved to penalize Russia for the attack on Ukraine, and Moscow has also moved to block access to the leading social media network as well as Twitter.

Russia thus joins the very small club of countries barring the largest social network in the world, along with China and North Korea.

Since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine last month, Russian authorities have stepped up pressure against independent media even though press freedoms in the country were already rapidly waning.

Blocking of Facebook and restricting of Twitter last week came the same day Moscow backed the imposition of jail terms on media publishing "false information" about the military.

In this context, Facebook had played a key information distribution role in Russia, even as it endures withering criticism in the West over matters ranging from political division to teenagers' mental health.

The war is, meanwhile, taking place during a period of unprecedented crackdown on the Russian opposition, with has included protest leaders being assassinated, jailed or forced out of the country.

Big US tech firms like Apple and Microsoft have announced halting the sale of their products in Russia, while other companies have made public their "pauses" of certain business activities or ties.

Last week, US internet service provider Cogent Communications said it had "terminated its contracts with customers billing out of Russia."

The Washington Post reported Cogent has "several dozen customers in Russia, with many of them, such as state-owned telecommunications giant Rostelecom, being close to the government."

It's exactly the kind of measure Ukrainian officials have been campaigning heavily for as they ask Russia be cut off from everything from Netflix to Instagram.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/03/11/facebook-eases-rules-to-allow-violent-speech-against-russian-invaders-a76869