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Russia Adds Meta to List of 'Terrorist and Extremist' Orgs

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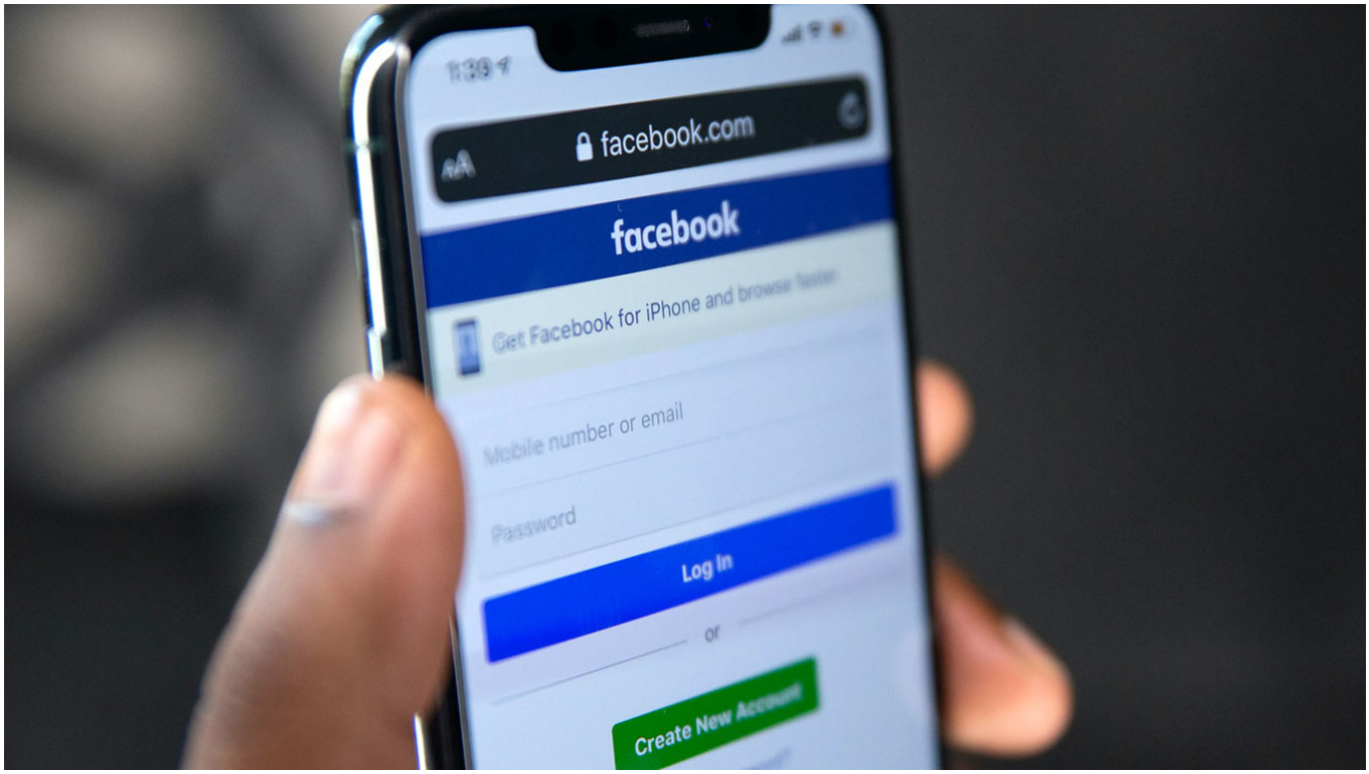

Solen Feyissa / unsplash

Russia has added U.S. tech giant Meta to its list of “terrorists and extremist” organizations, according to state financial watchdog Rosfinmonitoring’s database.

Moscow banned Meta products Facebook and Instagram in March after authorities accused the company of tolerating "Russophobia" during Russia's military campaign in Ukraine, making the popular social media platforms inaccessible to Russian users without the use of a VPN.

Russia in late March banned Facebook and Instagram for "carrying out extremist activities" after authorities accused Meta of tolerating "Russophobia" during Russia's military campaign in Ukraine.

The latest designation by Rosfinmonitoring means Russian citizens and companies who purchase ads on Facebook or Instagram could face up to 10 years in prison on charges of “sponsoring extremism.”

"Users of Meta products do not violate the law. The legal situation has not changed in any way since the court banned Meta products," Russian Senator Andrei Klishas said Tuesday.

Russian prosecutors have already started handing out notices to citizens warning of administrative or criminal liability for using Facebook and Instagram, prominent human rights lawyer Pavel Chikov reported.

Related article: Russia Bans Instagram and Facebook as 'Extremist'

Chikov said the latest move "in itself, did not really change anything" but was a reminder of the risks associated with using Meta apps "considering prosecutors are being proactive."

On Telegram, the lawyer said users could be prosecuted for mentioning Meta without disclaiming the ban on its activities, or for showing the logo of any Meta organizations.

The ban does not apply to popular messenger app WhatsApp.

In March, Meta said it planned to allow its platforms' users to post messages calling for violence against Russians, and in particular against the Russian military, amid the invasion of Ukraine — but not credible threats against civilians.

The Moscow court ruling that banned Facebook and Instagram as "extremist" organizations followed soon after.

AFP contributed reporting.

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