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Russia Demands Google Restore 200 Pro-Kremlin YouTube Channels

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Authorities in Russia have called on Google to restore more than 200 pro-government YouTube channels that have been blocked since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the state-run TASS news agency reported Tuesday.

Russia's state media regulator Roskomnadzor said it sent Google CEO Sundar Pichai a request to unblock the channels of "Russian media, federal authorities, companies and sports clubs, as well as various public, political and musical figures who speak out in support of the Russian authorities' actions."

The watchdog listed the YouTube channels of the Kremlin-funded broadcaster RT and the news website RBC as being among the channels it wants restored, TASS reported.

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Roskomnadzor's demand comes less than a week after Russia's state-owned telecom operator Rostelecom warned that streaming speeds on YouTube would deteriorate due to alleged "technical problems" with Google's equipment.

Pro-Kremlin and independent media have since reported that the Russian government is deliberately slowing down YouTube, with plans to start blocking it entirely later this year. The Kremlin has denied the reports and blames Google's pullout of equipment from Russia.

Moscow has so far stopped short of blocking YouTube as it has with Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram, along with scores of independent media outlets.

YouTube suspended monetization and all payment-based services in Russia following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Before the full-scale invasion, Russia threatened to punish Google and other Western tech companies if they failed to delete banned content, including anything in support of the late opposition figure Alexei Navalny.

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