

Telegram Founder Durov Allowed to Temporarily Leave France

By [AFP](#)

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Pavel Durov, CEO and co-founder of Telegram messaging app, arrives at the Paris courthouse for a hearing with his lawyer David-Olivier Kaminski (L), in Paris on December 6, 2024. **Thomas SAMSON / AFP**

Telegram founder Pavel Durov has been allowed to temporarily leave France, where he is charged with multiple infractions linked to allegedly enabling organised crime, sources told AFP.

Durov, now 40, was sensationally detained at Le Bourget airport outside Paris in August 2024, and charged with a litany of violations related to the popular messaging app he founded.

It was the first time the founder of a social media company was arrested over content on his platform. With more than 900 million active users, Telegram is one of top messaging apps in the world.

After days of questioning after his arrest, he was charged with several counts of failing to curb extremist and terrorist content and released on a €5 million (\$5.6 million) bail.

He had been banned from leaving the country, but on Saturday flew out to Dubai, sources said.

"He departed France this morning," one knowledgeable source told AFP, adding that Durov had left with the authorities' permission.

Another source said Durov, one of the world's most influential tech bosses, had departed from Le Bourget airport outside Paris for Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, where his company is based.

According to a third source, an investigating judge had authorised the entrepreneur to leave France for "several weeks."

The Russian-born Durov holds Russian, French and United Arab Emirates passports. An enigmatic figure who rarely speaks in public, he is a multi-billionaire fond of ascetic practices.

A Telegram spokeswoman declined to comment when reached by AFP.

Durov's lawyers were not immediately available for comment.

The investigating judge accepted Durov's request to modify conditions of his supervision several days ago, said one of the sources.

Related article: ['The West, Like Russia, Is Trying to Pressure Him': What Do Russians Think About Pavel Durov's Legal Battle in France?](#)

A self-proclaimed libertarian, Durov championed online confidentiality. Moscow tried to block Telegram in 2018, but abandoned those efforts two years later.

He initially criticised his arrest, but has since announced steps appearing to bow to Paris's demands.

Extracts from Durov's questioning in December through an interpreter, seen by AFP, showed that he initially blamed French authorities for failing to alert Telegram to alleged criminal activity.

But Durov nevertheless admitted that "it was while I was held in custody that I realised the seriousness of all the allegations."

Investigators have confronted Durov with more than a dozen specific cases, ranging from child abuse to drug trading, scams, arms sales and the hiring of hitmen.

President Emmanuel Macron has defended a decision to grant French nationality to Durov, adding it was a "strategy" concerning those who "shine in the world."

According to a source close to the investigation, Durov had emphasised his links to the French head of state during questioning.

He has received support from fellow tech tycoon and chief executive of X, Elon Musk, who posted comments under the hashtag #FreePavel.

The Kremlin has warned France against turning the case against Durov "into political persecution."

Forbes magazine estimates his current fortune at \$15.5 billion, though he proudly promotes the virtues of an ascetic life that includes ice baths and not drinking alcohol or coffee.

By arresting Durov, French authorities dived headlong into a fractious debate on free speech online.

Some said Durov should not be held responsible for abuse of the platform, while others have pointed out that Durov may well have brought scrutiny on to himself.

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