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WhatsApp Accuses Russian Government of Trying to 'Fully Block' Platform

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IMAGO/Rüdiger Wölk/TASS

WhatsApp said Thursday that the Russian government was attempting to "fully block" the messaging app as authorities intensify pressure on citizens to switch to a state-backed alternative that critics argue was designed for surveillance and political censorship.

"Trying to isolate over 100 million users from private and secure communication is a backwards step and can only lead to less safety for people in Russia," WhatsApp said in a statement posted on X.

"We continue to do everything we can to keep users connected," it added.

The company did not specify how access to the platform was being restricted, nor did it detail what steps it was taking to maintain service in Russia. WhatsApp has over 100 million users in the country.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov later confirmed that state media regulator Roskomnadzor

was blocking the messaging app.

The Moscow Times contacted WhatsApp's parent company Meta for comment.

Several people in Russia told The Moscow Times on Thursday that they were able to access WhatsApp only by using a virtual private network, or VPN, a common tool for bypassing internet restrictions.

Related article: Kremlin Downplays Impact of Telegram Restrictions on Frontline Communications

Earlier, the exiled news outlets TV Rain and Meduza reported that WhatsApp's website had been removed from Russia's national Domain Name System (DNS). Removing a website from the system can make it inaccessible to users unless they employ workarounds such as VPNs.

Other websites, including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and even The Moscow Times also appear to have been removed from Russia's DNS this week. Russia first blocked the website of The Moscow Times in 2022 for its coverage of the invasion of Ukraine.

WhatsApp's accusations on Thursday echoed claims made earlier this week by Telegram's founder, Pavel Durov, after Roskomnadzor announced new restrictions on his messaging app over allegations that it had failed to combat fraud and to protect the personal data of its users.

The Kremlin said Wednesday that Russian authorities were in contact with Telegram over the alleged violations that prompted the restrictions. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov outlined similar expectations for Meta.

"It's a matter of complying with the law. If Meta complies and works with the Russian authorities, then we can reach some kind of an agreement," Peskov said in an interview.

Roskomnadzor began restricting voice and video calls on WhatsApp and Telegram in August 2025 as part of what it described as an anti-fraud initiative, a move both companies criticized.

The restrictions on WhatsApp and Telegram come as authorities push Russians to download the state-backed messaging app Max, where a number of pro-Kremlin channels have slowly been migrating since the summer.

Max reached 70 million monthly users in December, making it the third-most used app in Russia. But it remains behind WhatsApp and Telegram, which, in December, had 94.5 million and 93.6 million monthly users, respectively.

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