

French Protests Show Need for State Control Over Social Media, Putin Says

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President Vladimir Putin [said](#) governments should exert influence over social media in the interests of security, pointing to protests in France as justification for greater state oversight of online platforms.

Speaking to representatives of African countries visiting Moscow for the Russia-Africa summit, Putin said French authorities had struggled to control the role of foreign-owned social networks in unrest in their country.

“The French leadership also points out that social media platforms that are not sovereign to France are influencing the events now taking place in major French cities,” Putin said. “They have difficulty influencing how social media operates in their country, or have no influence at all.”

“I think it would be right for all of us to have influence over this and think about security,” he added, without specifying what form that influence should take.

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Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets in France in recent weeks to protest rising prices and declining living standards.

Russia-linked disinformation networks have themselves been accused of exploiting the French protests. Researchers at Alliance4Europe [identified](#) a coordinated campaign linking anger over living costs to France’s support for Ukraine, though they found no evidence that foreign actors were behind the protests themselves.

Russia [scored](#) four out of 100 in an internet freedom ranking compiled by technology research company Cloudwards, placing it alongside Iran, China and Pakistan. Only North Korea ranked lower, with zero points.

The researchers said Russia systematically blocks or restricts major international platforms, including YouTube, X, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok, as well as messaging services WhatsApp and Telegram and independent news outlets.

Russian authorities have also effectively banned opposition street protests at home, using restrictive assembly laws and lingering coronavirus measures to prevent or disperse demonstrations.

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