

Russia fines Google for violating data storage law

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A Moscow court ordered Google on Thursday to pay a fine of 3 million rubles (roughly \$41,000) for refusing to store the personal data of Russian users on servers in Russia, a move that is part of the

government's longstanding effort to tighten its grip on online activity.

The fine is the first one given to Google in Russia over data storage regulations. Facebook and Twitter previously received similar penalties for allegedly violating Russian regulations.

The Russian government's efforts to control internet and social [media](#) use date back to 2012, when a law allowing authorities to blacklist and block certain online content was adopted. Since then, a growing number of restrictions targeting messaging apps, websites and social media platforms have been introduced.

One legal provision required tech companies to keep servers in Russia for storing personal information they gather from Russian citizens. Russia's state communications watchdog, Roskomnadzor, has tried unsuccessfully for several years to force large [tech companies](#) like Facebook, Twitter and Google to move the data of Russian users to Russia.

The law allows online services that don't follow the data storage requirement to be banned from Russia. The government has repeatedly threatened to block Facebook and Twitter, but stopped short of outright bans, likely fearing the move would elicit too much public outrage. So far, authorities only have banned LinkedIn for failing to store user data in Russia, and the social media platform was not very popular in the country before then.

Pressure on major social media platforms increased this year after Russian authorities criticized them for being used to bring tens of thousands of people into the streets to demand the release of jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's most well-known critic. The wave of demonstrations across the country posed a major challenge to the Kremlin.

Officials alleged that social media platforms failed to remove calls for children to join the protests, and Putin urged police to more steadfastly monitor [social media platforms](#) and to track down those who draw children into "illegal and unsanctioned street actions."

Facebook and Twitter have been fined repeatedly this year for failing to remove content that Russian authorities deemed unlawful.

Roskomnadzor once threatened to ban Twitter and since March has slowed down the speed at which the [platform](#) can operate.

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