

Telegram CEO claims complying with Brazil order impossible

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The icon for the instant messaging Telegram app is seen on a smartphone, Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023, in Marple Township, Pa. A federal judge in Brazil on Wednesday, April 26, ordered a temporary suspension of messaging app Telegram, citing the social media platform's alleged failure to provide all information Federal Police requested on neo-Nazi chat groups. Credit: AP Photo/Matt Slocum, File

Telegram's CEO said Thursday that the social media company will appeal a Brazilian judge's decision to block access to its platform in Brazil for failing to hand over data on neo-Nazi activity. He claimed compliance was "technologically impossible." In a statement posted to his Telegram account, Pavel Durov said that when local laws or unfeasible requirements counter his company's mission—"to preserve privacy and freedom of speech around the world"—it sometimes has to quit markets.

Telegram has been blocked in the past by governments, including Iran, China and Russia, while in the latter country. Kremlin partisans have employed it as a digital weapon in President Vladimir Putin's war of conquest in Ukraine.

Durov said the Brazilian federal judge who ordered the suspension Wednesday "requested data that is technologically impossible for us to obtain." He claimed to be defending Brazilian users' "right to private communication" but did not elaborate.

Telegram users can post publicly to channels they create or join—or communicate privately. The company says "secret chats" between individual users can be encrypted.

United Arab Emirates-based Telegram's press office did not respond to questions emailed by The Associated Press or sent via the app to a company media representative.

In addition ordering the blocking of Telegram, which Brazilian internet providers and wireless carriers enforced, the judge set a daily fine of about \$200,000 for noncompliance. Durov did not say whether Telegram intends to pay.

The ruling from a [federal court](#) in Espírito Santo state said "the facts

shown by police authorities show a clear purpose of Telegram of not cooperating with the investigation." Police are especially keen on Telegram content related to school violence.

The development comes as Brazil grapples with a wave of school attacks, including one in November in which a man with a swastika pinned to his vest shot four people to death and wounded 12 in the small town of Aracruz in Espírito Santo state.

Brazil's federal government has strived to stamp out [school violence](#) with a particular focus on the supposedly nefarious influence of social media.

Last year, a Brazilian Supreme Court justice ordered a nationwide shutdown of Telegram, arguing it had repeatedly ignored requests for cooperation. After five days of blockage, Telegram apologized, claiming not to have received the court's communications.

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