

Google clashes with Brazil over disinformation bill

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Brazil Justice Minister Flavio Dino accused Google of "manipulating" search results.

The Brazilian government accused Google Tuesday of "deceitful and abusive propaganda" against a bill to tackle disinformation online,

ordering the US tech giant to stay out of the debate or label its positions as advertising.

The row came as lawmakers in Brazil's lower house prepared to vote on the so-called "fake news bill"—dubbed the "censorship bill" by critics—which aims to make [tech companies](#) regulate disinformation, hate speech and [violent content](#) on their platforms.

Brazil's National Consumer Protection Bureau ordered Google, which has criticized the bill, to label as "advertising" messages on its site warning the legislation could "make your internet worse" and "increase confusion about what is true or false in Brazil."

The bureau gave the company two hours to balance that with "counter-propaganda" or face a fine of one million reais (\$200,000) an hour.

Justice Minister Flavio Dino accused Google of "manipulating" [search results](#) to display content opposed to the bill more prominently—a charge the company denied.

"No one should be manipulating Brazilians' freedom of expression," Dino told a news conference, accusing Google of abusing its platform to promote its own position.

Addressing the same conference, consumer protection secretary Wadih Damous announced a series of measures against what he called Google's "deceitful and abusive propaganda."

Google's Brazilian home page had prominently displayed a message against the bill, linking to a blog post by the company's public policy director, Marcelo Lacerda.

Lacerda warned of "undesirable consequences" of the bill, including

inadvertently protecting those who spread disinformation, by preventing companies from implementing their own terms of use.

The link to the blog was removed from Google's Brazilian home page Tuesday. A Google spokeswoman told AFP it had been scheduled to expire anyway, saying the decision was not related to the government's measures.

The bill, which has already passed the Senate, was introduced three years ago—one in a series of efforts worldwide to grapple with the flood of misinformation online.

It shot to prominence more recently, after supporters of far-right ex-president Jair Bolsonaro invaded the halls of power in Brasilia on January 8, allegedly egged on by social media disinformation claiming their candidate's 2022 election loss to leftist successor Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva was fraudulent.

Bolsonaro attacked the [bill](#) Monday in an interview with conservative news site Revista Oeste, calling it "the beginning of the end of our freedom."

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