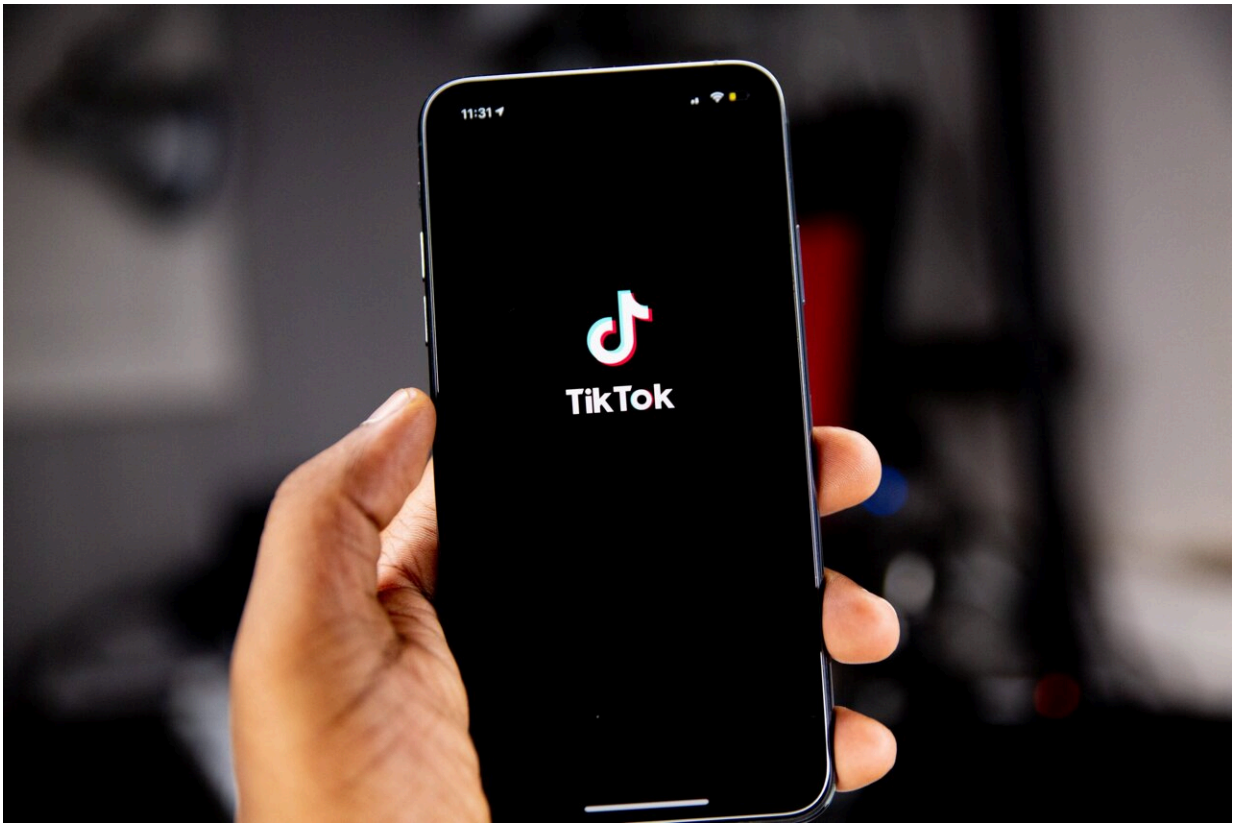


TikTok stops working in Kyrgyzstan after ban proposals

April 18 2024



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Kyrgyzstan appears to have blocked TikTok after the Central Asian country's security services called to restrict the social media app to "protect children".

When AFP journalists in the country tried to access TikTok on Thursday, a message read: "Unable to load, please try again."

Owned by Chinese group ByteDance, TikTok has faced a global backlash from politicians and regulators over issues ranging from the mental health effects of the app on children to the data it allegedly scoops up from users.

Kyrgyzstan's digital ministry said on Tuesday it had "informed telecommunications operators of the need to limit access to TikTok, based on a decision by the [security services](#)."

Kyrgyzstan's State Committee for National Security, known as the GKNB, is a successor to the Soviet-era KGB secret police and headed by the powerful Kamchybek Tashiev.

The digital ministry said ByteDance had "failed to comply" with [legal requirements](#) outlined in a law to protect the "mental, physical, spiritual and moral development of children."

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) expressed "concern" over the decision earlier this week.

"RSF calls on the government to lift this arbitrary blocking and define a clear legal framework to regulate platforms," the pressure group said in a post on X on Wednesday following local media reports that a ban was imminent.

Bishkek has been mounting an escalating campaign to bring independent media and civil society closer under state control.

Kyrgyzstan, which borders China and has close economic ties with Beijing, had previously been an outlier in Central Asia as a relatively

free space for information, compared to its ultra-closed neighbors.

But in recent months authorities have arrested several journalists, suspended independent media outlets and passed a "foreign agents" law designed to silence dissenters.

TikTok is also in the spotlight over its data policies in the United States and European Union amid fears over connections to the Chinese state.

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