

Telegram chief Durov announces 'new features' to combat illicit content

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Founder and chief executive Pavel Durov lashed out at claims that 'Telegram is some sort of anarchic paradise'

Telegram founder and chief executive Pavel Durov on Friday announced a range of new features aimed at combating illicit content, bots and

scammers, a week after he was arrested and charged by French authorities over violations on the messaging app.

Durov had on Thursday broken his silence with his first public comments following his arrest, which he slammed as "misguided" and "surprising".

But he had also acknowledged that Telegram was "not perfect" and would take more action against [illegal content](#) which he argues comes from a tiny proportion of its 950 million users.

"While 99.999 percent of Telegram users have nothing to do with crime, the 0.001 percent involved in illicit activities create a bad image for the entire platform, putting the interests of our almost billion users at risk," he wrote in his new statement on Telegram Friday.

"That's why this year we are committed to turn moderation on Telegram from an area of criticism into one of praise," he added.

Durov said Telegram had removed the "people nearby" feature, which allowed users to locate other Telegram users but he said "was used by less than 0.1 percent of Telegram users, but had issues with bots and scammers."

In its place, Telegram is launching "businesses nearby" to showcase "legitimate, verified businesses."

He said Telegram had also disabled new media uploads to Telegraph, its standalone blogging tool, "which seems to have been misused by anonymous actors", he said.

Following four days of detention, Durov, 39, was charged on several counts of failing to curb extremist and illegal content on Telegram.

He had been arrested August 24 at Le Bourget airport outside Paris after arriving aboard a private jet and was questioned in the subsequent days by investigators.

Durov was granted bail of five million euros (\$5.5 million) on the condition that he must report to a police station twice a week as well as remain in France.

On Thursday, he defiantly said that France was wrong to hold him accountable for "crimes committed by third parties on the platform".

An enigmatic figure who rarely speaks in public, Durov is a citizen of Russia, France and the United Arab Emirates, where Telegram is based.

Forbes magazine estimates his current fortune at \$15.5 billion, though he proudly promotes the virtues of an ascetic life that includes ice baths and not drinking alcohol or coffee.

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