



Russia Slaps Google, Facebook with Game-changing Million-dollar Fines

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A Moscow court on Friday said it was fining Google 7.2 billion roubles (\$98 million) for what it described as a repeated failure to delete 2,600 pieces of content classified as illegal by the Russian government. The move marks the first-revenue-based fine of its kind in Russia.

Moscow this year placed greater pressure on Silicon Valley in a campaign that critics say is an attempt by Russian authorities to more tightly control the Internet, which they argue threatens the freedom of individuals and corporations.

Later on Friday, the court also fined Meta Platforms, which owns Facebook, a sum of 2 billion roubles (\$27.15 million) on the same basis. According to Russia's communication watchdog, Roskomnadzor, Facebook and Instagram did not remove 2,000 pieces that violate Russian law.

Russia placed small fines on foreign technology firms previously this year, but the Friday penalties were the first time it exacted a percentage of the companies' annual Russian revenue, increasing the sum of the fine.

Russia has mandated that companies delete posts that promote drug abuse and pastimes considered dangerous, along with information about weapons and explosives and content from groups deemed terrorists.

Google is currently at odds with Moscow over several issues. The Russian government demanded the search giant restore access to the German-language channels of state-backed broadcaster Russia Today (RT).

Moscow has also demanded that 13 foreign and mostly U.S. tech companies, including Google and Meta Platforms, be officially represented on Russian soil by Jan. 1 or face possible restrictions or outright bans. [read more.](#)

Google has already paid over 32 million roubles in fines over content violations this year.

Last week, a sanctioned Russian businessman won in court against Google in a case that could see the company hit with another hefty fine.

“For some reason, the company fulfills decisions of American and European courts unquestioningly,” Anton Gorelkin, a ruling party deputy in the lower house of parliament who sits on the Information Policy committee, wrote on *Telegram* Friday. “If the turnover fine doesn’t bring Google to its senses, I’m afraid that some very unpleasant measures will be taken.”

Following a 2019 law, Russian authorities have upgraded systems they say would allow the country to completely cut itself off from the Internet if needed.

Google, Facebook, and other major tech companies have faced scrutiny from lawmakers and citizens who say the firms exhibit a left-wing bias and use their platforms to suppress conservative views.

In an exposé, Emerald Robinson described how *National Review* and other conservative think tanks and publications known for their anti-Trump stances took money from Google, which the social media giant leveraged to get favorable coverage from the outlets:

There were rumors in the summer of 2018 that an audiotape was circulating that would send shockwaves through the think tanks of Washington and the conservative intellectual movement in particular. A top Google executive had been recorded telling his fellow employees that Google generously donated to conservative think tanks and magazines to dampen criticism of their anti-conservative bias. In essence, Google was buying off Conservatism Inc. and the GOP establishment to stay silent while Google monitored, harassed, and excluded Trump supporters.

The compromised organizations included the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), the Cato Institute, CPAC, the *Weekly Standard*, and *National Review*.

Facebook has waded heavily into political activity, including influencing elections. A senior researcher recently brought on board by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative — a group responsible for spending nearly half a billion dollars during the 2020 cycle to pave the way for a Joe Biden win — previously served on the steering committee of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, the brainchild of Facebook founder/CEO Mark Zuckerberg and his wife, gave hundreds of millions of dollars to the Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL) with the ostensible aim of “modernizing” America’s voting systems.

Most of the money was used to increase turnout in overwhelmingly Democrat areas. The Amistad Project, an election-watchdog group, alleged that CTCL “used the money to illegally inflate turnout in key Democratic swing states as part of this effort.”

Recent polling indicates a majority of Americans want to see companies such as Google and Facebook reined in. Seventy-five respondents to a survey released last week said “Big tech companies are too big,” and 71 percent said, “There should be public oversight in use of algorithms.”