

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CRISIS

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: IT, Internet and Communications

FILE PHOTO: A 3D printed Facebook's new rebrand logo Meta is seen in front of displayed Google logo in this illustration taken on November 2, 2021. | Photo Credit: Reuters

Tech giants like Meta and Google have started acting on the Russia-Ukraine crisis by restricting the Russian media from running ads or monetising on their platforms after Russia invaded Ukraine. Meanwhile, micro-blogging platform Twitter is being restricted for some users in the country, the company said.

Facebook owner Meta Platforms Inc on Friday barred Russian state media from running ads or generating revenue from ads on its platform anywhere in the world, the parent company of social media giant Facebook said.

"We also continue to apply labels to additional Russian state media," its security policy head, Nathaniel Gleicher, said on Twitter. "These changes have already begun rolling out and will continue into the weekend."

He added, "We are now prohibiting Russian state media from running ads or monetising on our platform anywhere in the world."

On Friday, one day after Russia invaded Ukraine, Moscow said it was partially limiting access to Meta Platforms Inc's Facebook, accusing it of "censoring" Russian media.

Alphabet Inc's Google barred on Saturday Russia's state-owned media outlet RT and other channels from receiving money for ads on their websites, apps and YouTube videos, similar to Facebook's move.

Citing "extraordinary circumstances," Google's YouTube unit said it was "pausing a number of channels' ability to monetise on YouTube." These included several Russian channels affiliated with recent sanctions.

Ad placement is largely controlled by YouTube.

Google added later that it was also barring Russian state-funded media outlets from using its ad technology to generate revenue on their own websites and apps.

In addition, the Russian media will not be able to buy ads through Google Tools or place ads on Google services such as search and Gmail, spokesman Michael Aciman said.

"We're actively monitoring new developments and will take further steps if necessary," Aciman said.

Videos from affected media will also come up less often in recommendations, YouTube spokesperson Farshad Shadloo said. He added that RT and several other channels would no longer be accessible in Ukraine after a Ukrainian government request.

On Saturday, Ukraine Digital Transformation Minister Mykhailo Fedorov said on Twitter he contacted YouTube "to block the propagandist Russian channels — such as Russia 24, TASS, RIA Novosti."

RT and Simonyan did not respond to requests for comment. YouTube declined to identify the other channels restricted.

Russia received an estimated \$7 million to \$32 million over the two years to December 2018 from ads across 26 YouTube channels it backed, digital researcher Omelas told Reuters at the time.

Twitter said on Saturday it is being restricted for some users in Russia.

Twitter said it was working to keep its service safe and accessible. It did not immediately respond to a question on whether Russia had communicated with the company about any actions.

Internet blockage observatory NetBlocks reported that Twitter had been restricted on leading networks. A Reuters reporter in Moscow on Saturday said the site was slow and had difficulties sending tweets.

Russia has been trying to exert tighter control over the internet and big tech companies for years, in efforts that critics say threaten individual and corporate freedom, and are part of a wider crackdown against outspoken opponents of the Kremlin.

Last year, Moscow slowed down the speed of Twitter in a punitive move because it said the site was not removing illegal content.

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