



Natalia Krapiva @natynettle *Fri Sep 17 09:13:41 +0000 2021*

BREAKING: @Apple and @Google just simultaneously pulled Russian opposition voting guide app on election morning.

It gets worse. THREAD 1/

Reuters: <https://t.co/TBAoelW6aA> <https://t.co/n8zITfDGMD>

MOSCOW, Sept 17 (Reuters) - Alphabet's Google ([GOOGL.O](#)) and Apple ([AAPL.O](#)) have removed jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's tactical voting app from their stores, his team said on Friday, after Russia accused the U.S. tech firms of meddling in its internal affairs.

2/ The app @Google & @Apple just shut down helped Russians that disagree with Putin find candidates to vote for.

The very definition of democratic process.

Both companies knew it.

For once, Putin was afraid too.

Story: @antontroian @INechepurenko
<https://t.co/gOwE2cwYR5> <https://t.co/jt3h2JCf2P>

"We want as many non-Kremlin-approved politicians as possible to end up in Parliaments, including regional ones," Ruslan Shaveddinov, one of the Navalny allies working on the "smart voting" push, said in a telephone interview. "This, at any rate, creates turbulence in the system, which is very, very important to us."

3/ Russia has tried everything to get the app pulled.

A spurious trademark lawsuit, legal threats...

@Google and @Apple knew exactly what was going on.

And, until this morning, they resisted.

Story: @craigtimberg @RobynDixon___
@ReedAlbergotti

<https://t.co/NxMONUKIVI> <https://t.co/5yH5lrH7IY>

Thursday's order to Google and Apple focused on an app built by Navalny's political allies to help opposition voters know how to cast their ballots in this month's legislative elections, while also highlighting the group's anti-corruption campaigns. The government ordered the two companies to block distribution of the app last month.

Google took no apparent action. Apple, however, forwarded an Aug. 16 email from Roskomnadzor to a Navalny aide, urging him to contact the censor to resolve the matter, according to a copy of the communication obtained by The Washington Post.

Navalny's team replied to Apple a few days later, calling the government demand "an illegal and arbitrary act of censorship" that was part of a "campaign of political repression." But the opposition heard nothing back from the company for several days. During this time, Apple's App Store stopped providing updates to the app, raising fears among opposition figures that it might get pulled from the store altogether, said opposition and digital rights activists with direct knowledge of the events.

4/ Worse: after pulling the real voting guide app, @Apple is *keeping* impostor apps.

Russians headed to the polls are now unwittingly installing apps that may put them in immediate danger. <https://t.co/rN1SzamrL>



@Apple 5/ Clearly, @Apple and @Google took this decision under pressure.

But the companies owe the Russian people an explanation.

6/ @apple, I can't believe I need to say this but even in Russia, voting is not criminal behavior.

Pic: Apple's correspondence to the App developers (via @christogrozev) <https://t.co/BVIFCFINzU>

Pursuant to Roskomnadzor's request included below, we are writing to notify you that your application will be removed from the Russia App Store because it includes content that is illegal in Russia, which is not in compliance with the App Store Review Guidelines :

5. Legal

Apps must comply with all legal requirements in any location where you make them available (if you're not sure, check with a lawyer). We know this stuff is complicated, but it is your responsibility to understand and make sure your app conforms with all local laws, not just the guidelines below. And of course, apps that solicit, promote, or encourage criminal or clearly reckless behavior will be rejected.

We note that the Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation and the Prosecutor's Office of the City of Moscow have also determined that the app violates the legislation of the Russian Federation by enabling interference in elections.

Russia's threats are unacceptable under international law.

@apple & @Google understandably want to protect their staff.

But they ALSO have an obligation to be transparent about decisions that affect millions of users.

By @maxseddon & @madhumita29

<https://t.co/5QArUN4FVG> <https://t.co/S5bwsnK6BJ>

The person close to the situation also said Google employees had received public and private threats of criminal prosecution if the company did not comply with the Kremlin request to remove the app from the store and search engines.

They said armed men, thought by staff to be police officers, spent several hours in Google's Moscow offices on Monday. Bailiffs also visited the offices a day later to demand it comply with a Moscow court ruling to remove the app from search results.

The person believed threats to staff of this nature were unprecedented, saying it had "never got this bad before."

8/ And here you have it, Putin's people now praising @Apple & @Google.■

By quietly deleting the apps, companies ceded the narrative to the government.

Truth that they should say: the orders violated international law & were enforced through duress

<https://t.co/CLZbV8YrwM>

9/ Silence from DC & other democracies (incl. from the @FO_Coalition) over this latest Russian thuggery is leaving US companies hanging out to dry...

... and raises obvious questions about the strength of Western gov's' commitments to democratic processes.

10/ BREAKING:

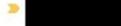
Yesterday, @Google pulled Russian opposition voting guide.

Today, election day 2: @Google is telling users to delete @googledocs, per ■■ orders.

If Google doesn't speak out about unlawful pressure & requests, they will escalate.

Link: <https://t.co/2VBYW69uTy> <https://t.co/Ki8hxVha7g>

Removal request received for your content / Получен запрос об удалении Вашего контента



removals@google.com

14:06 (0 минут назад) ☆ ↶

кому: [Redacted]

Hello,

Google has received a claim from [ROSKOMNADZOR](#) (Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Communications) that your content violates Russian Law #149-FZ On information, information technology and information protection. The following URL(s) associated with your content have been added to a blocklist:

[https://docs.google.com/document/u/2/d/e/\[Redacted\]](https://docs.google.com/document/u/2/d/e/[Redacted])

If you do not remove the above content, Google may be required to block it.

The notice that we received may be posted online by a service called Lumen at <http://www.lumendatabase.org>. You can search for the notice associated with the removal of your content by going to the Lumen search page at <http://www.lumendatabase.org/search.cgi>, and entering in the URL that was provided above.

To find out more about the Russian Law #149-FZ On information, information technology and information protection, please visit <http://eais.rkn.gov.ru/>

Regards,

The Google Team

11/ ■■■ Russian election, 3rd & final day:

- opposition @Apple & @Google apps... blocked
- opposition @googledocs & @YouTube vids...blocked
- widespread evidence of ballot stuffing
- violence against election observers

<https://t.co/uKV3pJOHBM>