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# Durov released on €5 million bail

## A French court has accused the Russian billionaire of a dozen offenses, including facilitating illegal transactions



Pavel Durov posted on Instagram.com

A French court has formally indicted Telegram founder Pavel Durov, accusing him of complicity in a litany of offenses and barring him from leaving France until the case against him concludes.

Durov appeared before a magistrates' court in Paris on Wednesday, four days after he was arrested upon arrival in the French capital from Azerbaijan. In a statement released on Wednesday night, the court said that Durov had been formally charged with a dozen offenses, including complicity in *“administering an online platform”* used by a criminal gang to conduct an illicit transaction, a charge that the court noted carries a maximum penalty of ten years in prison.

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The rest of the charges, which were announced by prosecutors on Monday, include facilitating fraud, money laundering, and the distribution of narcotics and child pornography, as well as refusal to turn over user data to law enforcement investigations.

The Russian entrepreneur, who also holds the citizenship of France, the UAE, and St. Kitts and Nevis, was released on a €5 million (\$5.55 million) bond.

He was ordered to remain in France until the investigation against him concludes, and to report to a police station twice a week.



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Criminal investigations in France are run by special magistrates – judges granted wide-ranging investigative powers. Charges like those leveled against Durov are typically announced before investigators have finished gathering evidence, and can be dropped at any time if they cannot be substantiated.

The investigation against Durov began in February, the court statement noted. This detail contradicts a statement released by prosecutors on Monday, which described the probe as beginning last month. It is being led by OFMIN, a French agency tasked with investigating crimes against minors.

Telegram, which has almost a billion monthly users, generally refuses to hand over user data or chat records to law enforcement. However, the company said on Sunday that it complies with local laws, and called it *“absurd to claim that a platform or its owner are responsible for abuse of that platform.”*

Anti-censorship activists have described Durov’s arrest as part of a wider campaign against free speech waged by Western governments, with NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden [accusing](#) France of taking the entrepreneur *“hostage”* in order to access private

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communications on Telegram. In a social media post on Monday, French President

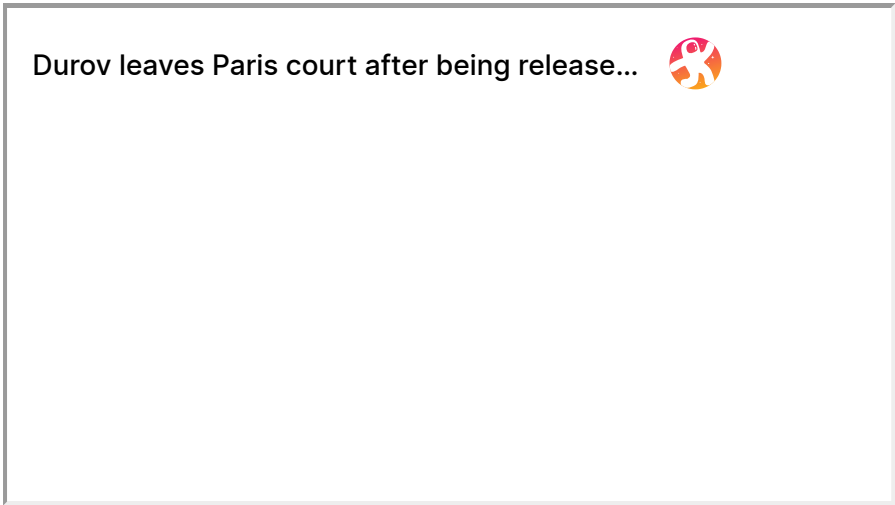
Emmanuel Macron insisted that Durov's arrest *"is in no way a political decision,"* and that France *"is more than anything attached to freedom of expression and communication."*

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It is unclear whether Durov has been pressed to hand over user data since his arrest on Saturday. Sergey Naryshkin, the head of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), said on Tuesday that the billionaire would likely be coerced into giving up this data. *"I really hope that he will not allow this,"* Naryshkin told Russia's TASS news agency.



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