

Telegram CEO Pavel Durov arrested in France amid investigation on App's Moderation Practices

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Pavel Durov, the Russian-French billionaire and founder of the Telegram messaging app, was arrested at Bourget airport near Paris on Saturday evening. French media outlets TF1 and BFM TV, citing anonymous sources, reported that Durov was apprehended while traveling aboard his private jet. The arrest was linked to a warrant issued in connection with a preliminary police investigation.

The investigation reportedly centers on the lack of moderation on Telegram, a platform known for its encrypted messaging service. Authorities allege that insufficient moderation has allowed criminal activities to thrive unchecked on the app. Telegram, which boasts nearly one billion

users, is particularly influential in Russia, Ukraine, and other former Soviet states, ranking among the top social media platforms globally.

French media suggest that Durov could face an indictment as early as Sunday. Telegram has not responded to requests for comment, and French officials, including the Interior Ministry and police, have remained silent on the matter.

Durov founded Telegram in 2013 with his brother after leaving Russia in 2014 due to government pressure to shut down opposition groups on his previous platform, VKontakte. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Telegram has played a crucial role in disseminating unfiltered information about the conflict, becoming a "virtual battlefield" for both sides.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has announced that its embassy in Paris is seeking clarification on Durov's arrest and has called on Western NGOs to advocate for his release. Durov's arrest has drawn criticism from Russian officials, who accuse France of authoritarian behavior similar to what Russia has been condemned for in the past.