

# Google sees jump in government 'takedown' requests

December 19 2013

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Employees from Taiwan Google in Taipei on October 26, 2013

Google said Thursday it saw a big jump in early 2013 in the number of requests from governments around the world to remove online content, in many cases for political reasons.

In an update to its "[transparency report](#)" for the first half of the year, Google said it saw a 68 percent jump in the number of requests from the prior six-month period, led by big increases from Turkey and Russia.

The updated report "is certainly not a comprehensive view of censorship online (but) it does demonstrate a worrying upward trend in the number of government requests, and underscores the importance of transparency around the processes governing such requests," said Google legal director Susan Infantino in a blog post.

"As we continue to add data, we hope it will become increasingly useful and informative in policy debates and decisions around the world."

From January to June 2013, Google said received 3,846 government requests to remove 24,737 pieces of content.

"Over the past four years, one worrying trend has remained consistent: governments continue to ask us to remove political content," Infantino said.

"Judges have asked us to remove information that's critical of them, police departments want us to take down videos or blogs that shine a light on their conduct, and local institutions like town councils don't want people to be able to find information about their decision-making processes."

She said officials "often cite defamation, privacy and even copyright laws in attempts to remove political speech from our services."

Overall, Google said it removed content in 36 percent of cases, including 54 percent in response to court orders.

In Turkey, the number of content removal requests rose by 966 percent, Google said.

That included a court order to remove search results linking to information about a political official and sex scandals—which Google

did not remove. Google also ignored requests from a Turkish government agency to remove a blog that contained information about the Kurdish party and Kurdish activists as well as a Google+ profile picture showing a map of Kurdistan.

In Russia, the number of requests rose 125 percent. That included 235 requests to remove content violating a Russian Internet restriction law, of which Google removed 115 items

In the United States, Google received 27 requests from a federal government agency to suspend 89 apps from the Google Play store that allegedly infringed on trademarks, and removed 76 of the apps.

Google received a request in Argentina to remove a Google "autocomplete" search entry linking a politician's name with an illicit drug, but did not comply.

In Cyprus, Google got a request to remove names of disputed territories in a map, but refused to comply.

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