

Japan court orders Google to delete data

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Google has received more than 100,000 requests for the removal of nearly 500,000 search results after the EU's top court said individuals have the right to "to be forgotten" when their personal data becomes outdated or inaccurate

A Japanese court has ordered Google to delete search results linking the claimant to a crime he did not commit, the latest in a series of rulings around the world on what search engines should tell users.

The Tokyo District Court this week placed a provisional order that

Google delete about half of 237 entries that appear after the plaintiff's name is entered, the Asahi Shimbun newspaper and other local media reported.

The man requested the injunction in June, arguing that these search results suggest he was involved in a crime and that this constitutes a threat to his current way of life and compromises his privacy, the Asahi said.

The ruling comes after the EU's top court said in May that individuals have the right to ask Google to delete personal data produced by its search engine.

Individuals have a right "to be forgotten", under certain circumstances when their personal data becomes outdated or inaccurate, the European Court of Justice said.

Google has received more than 100,000 requests for the removal of nearly half a million pages since the ECJ ruling earlier this year.

The Japanese injunction, which only applies to one specific set of data, is a provisional ruling lacking the same sweeping power as the legislative changes in Europe.

It is not precedent-setting and grants no rights to anyone other than the claimant.

It is also at the lowest judicial level in a country where legal tussles frequently go to appeal.

According to reports, Judge Nobuyuki Seki said some of the search results "infringe personal rights".

"Google, which manages the search engine, has the obligation to delete them," it said.

"The man received tangible damage from the search results, which give the impression that he is a bad man," it said.

It is believed to be the first legal decision in Japan ordering the operator of a search engine to remove search results, although there were earlier rulings on aspects of Google's "autocomplete" function.

"We've just received the order, so we are reviewing the order," a company spokesman told AFP, adding they were studying options, including an appeal.

He added that the company does comply with legal take-down notices.

In April last year, a Japanese court told Google it had to de-link words in its autocomplete function to prevent the search engine suggesting criminal acts when users typed one man's name.

But the appeals court Tokyo High Court in January overturned the lower court's decision.

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