

# Google invokes free speech in French fine appeal

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France's National Commission on Informatics and Liberty imposed a fine on Google after the US Internet giant only partially honoured requests by individuals to have information about them removed from its search engines

Google said Thursday it feared for free speech if France succeeded in forcing it to apply the right to have information about a person removed from its search engines not just in France, but worldwide.

Lodging an appeal against a 100,000-euro (\$112,000) fine imposed by a French regulator, Google argued that French authorities should not have the right to decide beyond the country's jurisdiction.

France's National Commission on Informatics and Liberty (CNIL) imposed the fine on Google after the US Internet giant only partially honoured requests by individuals to have information about them removed from its search engines.

Google accorded the right for its European extensions—google.fr and google.de for example—but not for [google.com](https://www.google.com). CNIL said the firm should apply the delisting to all extensions, regardless of where the search is being performed.

"CNIL, as a French authority does not have under French law to impose measures outside of the nation's borders," Google's legal director for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, Yoram Elkaim, told AFP.

"It is no longer a debate about the right to be forgotten, which by the way we are not questioning," said Elkaim.

The European Court of Justice has recognised the "right to be forgotten" since 2014, allowing individuals, under certain conditions, to have references to them removed from the Internet.

Elkaim said that instead "it is really a wider debate about extraterritoriality, the availability of content globally."

He said Google has for years faced requests from countries to remove information globally that contravened local laws, such as a Turkish law prohibiting the denigration of the nation's founder Ataturk or Thailand's law banning criticism of the king.

"The laws apply on their territory, but they can't dictate what French Internet users can see," said Elkaim.

"It is important to maintain this principle, and if we were forced to apply the CNIL's decision globally, we would be in a much more difficult situation" when nations try to force it to remove content globally.

He added that Google's system for its European search engines by which it filters out results that should not be available in a given country was 99.9 percent effective.

Google does not expect the Council of State, France's highest administrative court, to take up its appeal before one year.

Google has a history of legal woes in Europe where concerns are high over its use of private data.

In France the US giant was fined 150,000 euros in 2014 for failing to comply with CNIL privacy guidelines for personal data.

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