Wikimedia Foundation appeals Russian fine over Ukraine war articles

The Wikimedia Foundation is challenging a Russian court's ruling that it violated disinformation laws in articles about the invasion of Ukraine. The organization filed its appeal last week, arguing that the articles contained "well-sourced, verified knowledge" and that Russia did not have jurisdiction over the globally operating Wikimedia Foundation.

The Moscow court fined Wikimedia 5 million rubles (around $65,000) after an April ruling that covered seven Russian-language articles, including Russian Invasions of Ukraine (2022), War Crimes during the Russian Invasion of Ukraine, Shelling of Hospital in Mariupol, and Massacre in Bucha. The decision followed an order from Russia's tech and communications agency Roskomnadzor, as well as the passage of a "fake news" law that attached criminal penalties to basic reporting on the invasion, including referring to well-documented Russian casualties and war crimes or describing the operation as a war. Google was also fined in April, and its Russian subsidiary declared bankruptcy after its bank account was frozen for non-payment.

"This decision implies that well-sourced, verified knowledge on Wikipedia that is inconsistent with Russian government accounts constitutes disinformation," said Stephen LaPorte, associate general counsel at the Wikimedia Foundation, in a statement. "The government is targeting information that is vital to people's lives in a time of crisis. We urge the court to reconsider in favor of everyone's rights to knowledge

access and free expression.” It filed the appeal on June 6th, and Russia’s government will have the chance to respond in the coming weeks.

Roskomnadzor has periodically asked Wikipedia to remove content in the past, but its war on Wikipedia — and other websites — intensified following the invasion. Wikipedia volunteers have also faced challenges outside Russia, including the arrest of an editor in Belarus in March.

https://www.theverge.com/2022/6/13/23164768/wikimedia-foundation-appeals-russian-court-disinformation-decision-ukraine-war-articles