

Wikipedia blocks access to protest Italian media law

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Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia, speaks in Jerusalem in 2009. Online encyclopedia Wikipedia has blocked access to its Italian version to protest a draft law to make websites amend content on even a single complaint of prejudice without independent verification.

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"The obligation ...without the possibility of any verification whatsoever constitutes for [Wikipedia](#) an unacceptable limitation on its freedom," a statement on its Italian site said on Wednesday.

Scandal-tainted Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's government has approved the law requiring websites to amend content within 48 hours

and without any commentary or explanation in case of complaints of [prejudice](#) or [bias](#).

"Sadly, there is no third party to judge whether a content is damaging and it is solely based on opinion," Wikipedia said.

The aim of this law was to prevent details of phone taps ordered by legal authorities from appearing in the press. Offending journalists risk one month in jail or a 10,000-euro (\$13,350) fine while publishers face paying up to 300,000 euros.

Those passing on court secrets to [journalists](#) can be imprisoned up to six years, under the legislation, which also limits the use of wiretaps to cases where the minimum sentence is five years in jail.

Berlusconi is embroiled in several court cases, accused notably of having bought sex from Moroccan nightclub dancer Karima El Mahroug, nicknamed "Ruby the Heart Stealer", when she was 17 -- a crime punishable by three years in jail.

He also faces separate trials for fraud and [bribery](#).

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