

Strict anti-piracy laws come into force in Japan

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Controversial laws punishing Internet users who download pirated files with fines or jail terms came into force in Japan on Monday.

Under the [new legislation](#) they could face up to two years in prison or a maximum of two million yen (\$25,700) in fines.

The revision follows a lobbying campaign by Japan's [music industry](#) for measures to curb piracy, but critics and local media have expressed concern.

They say the change in the law allows authorities to target any Internet user and could be open to abuse.

However, advocates say charges can be only be filed against alleged violators if copyright holders lodge a [criminal complaint](#).

Before the revision, the law punished only those who uploaded unauthorised music and videos, with penalties of up to 10 years in prison or a fine of up to 10 million yen.

When the new law was passed in June, websites of the Japanese [finance ministry](#), the Supreme Court and other public offices were defaced or brought down in apparent protest at the change.

The following month about 80 masked people, calling themselves allies of the global hacker activist group Anonymous, picked up litter in Tokyo

in a novel protest against the tightened laws.

They were dressed in black and wore masks of Guy Fawkes, the central figure in England's 1605 Gunpowder Plot to blow up parliament, which have become a symbol of protests by the loosely linked alliance around the world.

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