

Russia web piracy law goes into effect despite protests

August 1 2013, by Maria Antonova



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Branded the "Russian SOPA" after the US anti-piracy initiative, the [law](#)

makes it easier to block websites that post or link to copyright [video content](#) without permission.

Copyright holders would have to provide documents to the Moscow City Court for a court order before contacting Russia's communications watchdog Roskomnadzor to block the offender.

Companies in the industry have lambasted the law, saying the measure makes it possible for anyone to block any website with ease and was put together without taking any suggestions from experts into account.

Roskomnadzor announced the launch of the new register online where copyright holders can file complaints against violating webpages. The register's website (nap.rkn.gov.ru) would not open Thursday morning, possibly due to an overload or an attack.

Google has called the law a "time bomb" for the Internet, and Yandex, the most popular search engine in Russia, said it "is directed against the logic of the Internet," not copyright violators.

"The new law makes it possible to shut down unwanted Internet resources by linking any piracy video to the website and submitting a lawsuit", and the "lack of clear wording" leaves ample room for abuse, VTB Capital said in a note to clients Thursday.

Russian television on Thursday hailed the new law as a measure to fight piracy. "Bad luck for lovers of freebies," Channel One called it on its newscast.

Popular webpages in Russia have launched a formal petition on a government website to push the authorities to reconsider the so-called "Russian SOPA," which gathered over 60,000 signatures by Thursday.

"Vote and share, otherwise tomorrow you will be able to open VKontakte only with the written sanction of a policeman," wrote anti-Kremlin protest leader Alexei Navalny, referring to Russia's most popular social network.

Marginalised by state television, Navalny has built up much of his popularity through the web.

He called on all Internet users to "start a political campaign to defend our right to information and access to the web without censorship."

The website popular with tech professionals Habrahabr.ru called on popular web pages to block themselves in an Internet strike for one day Thursday.

Popular website Lurkmore.to had a black screen up saying "Blocked by Roskomnadzor decision" in a protest.

Russia has been phasing in a number of measures that observers say aim to severely limit freedom of expression on the web.

The Russian parliament plans to expand the piracy law to include music later this year.

A new measure banning the media from using expletives also went into effect in April. In July the online publication Lenta.Ru said that authorities demanded blocking three articles, including an interview with a language professor about the origins of Russian obscene words.

Last year another law went into force that allows the blocking of websites with content that contain child pornography, calls to commit suicide or information on drug use.

That law was also criticised by the industry as containing wording that can be exploited. In November, the authorities briefly put the entire YouTube service onto the blacklist due to what they later said was a "technical mistake."

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