

UN warns Turkey's Internet law may break rights rules

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Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan addresses members of parliament in Ankara on February 11, 2014

A new Internet control law in Turkey that has sparked outrage both at home and abroad could breach international human rights rules, the United Nations warned Friday.

"The law as it stands appears to be incompatible with Turkey's international human rights obligations, in particular those related to

freedom of expression and the right to privacy," said Rupert Colville, spokesman for the UN high commissioner for human rights.

"The same rights that people have offline must also be protected online," he told reporters.

Turkey's opposition and several [rights groups](#) have urged the country's president, Abdullah Gul, not to approve the new curbs adopted by parliament last week that would enable authorities to block web pages deemed insulting or as invading privacy.

The rules would also require Internet service providers to store data on web users' activities for two years and make it available to the authorities upon request without a judicial order, Colville said.

In addition, Internet service providers face severe penalties if they fail to remove content deemed to be illegal, he said.

Gul, who has two weeks to sign the new rules into law, on Thursday said he was trying to iron out problems.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other defenders of the law insist that the new restrictions protect individual rights, but critics argue that they are a fresh assault on freedom of expression.

Some of Erdogan's critics also say the legislation is specifically aimed at stopping evidence of high-level corruption—implicating several government allies—being seen online.

Colville noted that the planned rules came on top of legislation enacted in May 2007 that placed broad restrictions on the Internet.

"Since the law came into force, approximately 37,000 websites have

reportedly been denied operation by court orders and administrative blocking orders," he said.

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