

Belarus tightens control over online media

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(AP)—The Belarusian parliament has approved a bill that would allow authorities to shut Internet media if they carry content deemed illegal.

Wednesday's move is part of the authorities' efforts to further tighten control over media ahead of November's presidential election, in which authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko is expected to seek extension of his 20-year rule.

Information Minister Lilia Ananich said while presenting the bill to lawmakers that an online news resource that receives at least two warnings over its content in one year will be blocked. The Belarusian law bans dissemination of extremist propaganda and other information that could hurt state interests.

Zhanna Litvina—the head of Belarusian Association of Journalists, an independent media rights watchdog—said the new law is a new "attack on freedom of speech."

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