

Russian bloggers take revenge over tough new law

MOSCOW, RUSSIA: Russian bloggers took revenge on Friday for a controversial new law imposing tough rules on online expression by inundating Moscow's communications watchdog with phony registration requests.



The law passed by lawmakers in Moscow means bloggers risk hefty fines should they be found guilty of transgressing it. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

Authorities in April passed new legislation - seen by critics as a bid to muzzle dissent on social media - requiring bloggers with more than 3,000 daily readers to register and adhere to stricter rules or face a large fine.

The state ITAR-TASS news agency reported that between 20 and 30% of registration requests received by media regulator Roskomnadzor on Friday, the day the law came into force, were spam.

Under the new law, bloggers are required to submit personal details to a special register, and may no longer write anonymously.

Critics have warned the law could be a setback for freedom of expression as it is so vaguely worded that it could be used to target any of the social networking sites and blogs that make up Russia's most vibrant forum for opposition political debate.

The legislation bars blogs from "making calls to carry out terrorism or publicly justifying terrorism", publishing "other extremist materials" or promoting violence or pornography.

Bloggers also will also have to verify the accuracy of the information they publish and ensure that it does not intrude into an individual's personal life.

Concealing or falsifying information important to the public as well as "besmirching a citizen" based on their profession or political beliefs is also banned.

"That means you can't bad-mouth a political opponent or write something bad about the police," wrote blogger Andrei Malgin on the popular Echo of Moscow radio station's website earlier this year.

Those who breach the law risk hefty fines of up to 50,000 rubles (\$1,400, €1,000).

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge

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