

Law Requiring Bloggers to Register as Mass Media Comes Into Force

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A law requiring Russian bloggers to register as mass media.

A law requiring popular bloggers to register as mass media took effect Friday, tightening government control over the country's influential online voices but leaving some uncertainty as to how strict the immediate scrutiny will become.

In accordance with the new law, any blog that receives more than 3,000 hits a day is required to register as a mass media outlet. The government has already shut down several opposition-minded websites and has the right to block any others without a court order or even a detailed explanation, so it remains unclear how much the rule changes will additionally erode Internet freedom in Russia.

The head of Russia's media watchdog, Alexander Zharov, said that there would be no national "census of bloggers," and that registration would be brought about voluntarily or as the result of public complaints, Vedomosti reported Friday.

The Izvestia newspaper reported it had obtained a list that the media watchdog has supposedly prepared of seven bloggers, to whom it would send letters on Friday requiring them to register their blogs as media outlets.

The roll includes novelist Boris Akunin, comedian and screenwriter Mikhail Galustyan, nationalist politician and author Eduard Limonov, stand-up comedian Mikhail Zadornov, photographer Sergei Dolya, blogger Dmitry Chernyshev — better known in Russia by his online name mi3ch — and head of NewsMedia holding Ashot Gabrelyanov, the report said.

Some appear to be expecting much closer scrutiny, such as Chernyshev, who on the eve of the law coming into force published a jocular "ode" to President Vladimir Putin, prefacing it with a note that "very little time is left until Aug. 1" and that he wanted to "kowtow to the authorities. Just in case."

Zharov, of the media watchdog, said bloggers could add tracking code to their pages so that if they received substantial traffic they could show "initiative" by registering with the agency voluntarily, Vedomosti reported.

The agency may also respond to reports from Internet users who point out a blog as potentially requiring registration, Zharov told Vedomosti.

See also:

[An Internet Censorship Law Right Out of '1984'](#)

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