

Russian Media Watchdog Bans Buddhist Text Because of Suicide Description

December 18, 2015



A Buddhist monk has filed a lawsuit against Roskomnadzor, the state media watchdog, after it banned a religious text from the 5th century, the Interfax news agency reported Friday.

Pannuyavudho Topper Bkhikkhu, who is also an administrator of the theravada.ru website, received in September a warning from Roskomnadzor saying that one of the texts from his site contained information banned for distribution in Russia, his lawyer Vitaliy Cherkasov said, Interfax reported.

The monk then had to remove the text from theravada.ru, which serves a St. Petersburg-based buddhist community, as the site could have been blocked by the watchdog, Cherkasov said.

The warning was issued because the 5th-century text Godhika Sutta Godhika allegedly contained the description of a certain way to commit suicide, Cherkasov told the agency.

“My client had to delete the comment, which has existed for 16 centuries, but all of the sudden Roskomnadzor in the 21st [century] showed up,” Cherkasov said.

A controversial Russian law enacted in 2012 prohibits online content advocating suicide and drug use, among other things. Any website in violation can be blocked by the government and be included in the country's official registry of forbidden sites.

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