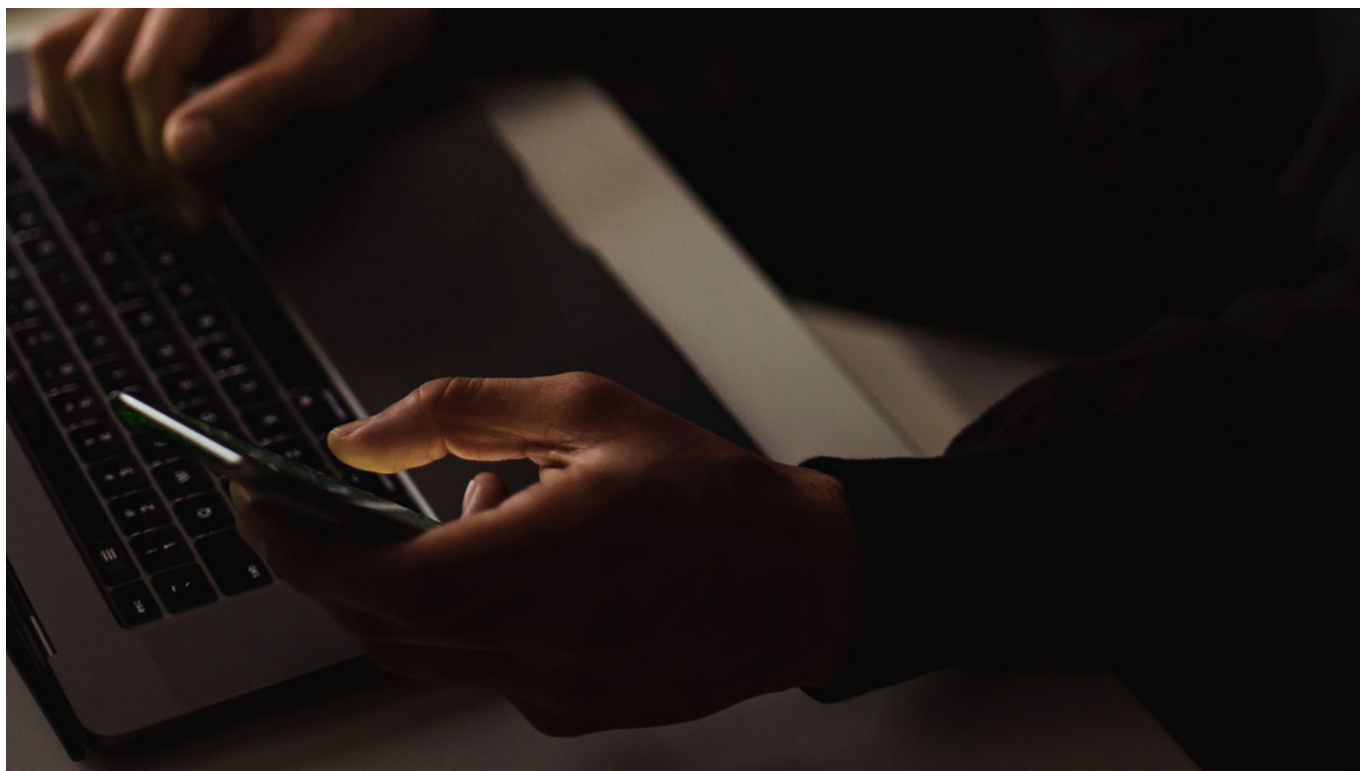# Russia Blocks TOR Anonymity Service

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Sora Shimazaki / pixels

Russia has blocked the web anonymity service TOR, the RBC business daily [reported](#) Wednesday, citing state communications watchdog Roskomnadzor, in what activists warn is part of an effort to restrict internet freedom within the country.

TOR — an acronym for "The Onion Router" — is encryption software that allows users to stealthily surf the internet and bypass locally imposed web restrictions. It is [used](#) by an estimated 300,000 Russians daily, about 15% of all TOR users.

Roskomnadzor said it included the TOR browser website in its register of prohibited information because it posted "information that ensures the operation of tools that provide access to illegal content."

TOR's developers earlier this week reported that the authorities had started to block the platform, with users complaining that they were unable to access the browser from Dec. 1.

In a statement on the platform's website on Wednesday, TOR, which is developed by Seattle-based The Tor Project, confirmed that the service was now blocked in Russia.

"The Russian government has officially [blocked our main website in Russia](#)," the statement by TOR's developers said.

They urged the international community to "put pressure on Russia" to undo their decision to block the service.

The torporject.org website had already been added to Roskomnadzor's [registry](#) of sites that contain "prohibited information" following a [court ruling](#) in 2017. However, that court ruling didn't restrict access to the site.

Related article: [Why the Kremlin Blocking TOR Is a Big Deal](#)

Russian authorities have accused TOR of providing a platform for illegal activities, including drug and gun sales, while Russian internet activists say the move to block it is part of the country's ongoing crackdown on internet freedom.

"This fits into the trend that we have been seeing lately, there is a real attack on internet freedom," said Alexander Isavnin, a member of the Internet Protection Society group. Isavnin said Russia is moving closer toward implementing its so-called sovereign internet that will allow the country to cut itself off from the rest of the World Wide Web.

The internet is Russia's main platform for political debate and Kremlin critics say the authorities have been eager to clamp down on online dissent.

Russia adopted a number of measures to increase its control over the internet in recent years, including controversial laws that [require](#) companies to store Russian users' data on servers located in Russia.

The country has also [blocked](#) access to several virtual private network (VPN) services, which authorities say allow access to illegal online content in violation of Russian law. VPNs allow internet users a greater level of anonymity online and can provide access to material that has been blocked by internet service providers.

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