

Reporters Without Borders

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Europe/Ex-USSR - Russia

Opposition sites blocked

How far will the crackdown on dissent go?

13 March 2014

Reporters Without Borders is stunned to learn that the opposition news websites [Grani.ru](#), [Kasparov.ru](#) and [EJ.ru](#) are being blocked. The communications regulatory agency Roskomnadzor [announced](#) this evening that they "have been added to the unified register of banned content at the request of the prosecutor general's office of the Russian Federation."

Well-known opposition leader Alexei Navalny's [blog on LiveJournal](#) is also being blocked.

"It is clear from the blocking of these sites a day after [the dismissal of Lenta.ru's editor](#) that we are at a turning point for online freedom of information in Russia," said Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Christophe Deloire. "We call on Roskomnadzor to explain itself and to reverse this outrageous decision.

"This new jump in censorship is unfortunately the predictable consequence of [the adoption of a law](#) in late December that allows the prosecutor-general's office and Roskomnadzor to block any content they regard as 'extremist' without referring to a judge. We expressed our alarm at the time about the broad and vague character of this concept, which includes calling for unauthorized demonstrations."

Deloire added: "If the Russian constitution still means anything, the authorities must repeal this provision, which took effect on 1 February and which legalizes the most arbitrary censorship."

The Roskomnadzor communiqué said [Grani.ru](#), [Kasparov.ru](#) and [EJ.ru](#) "are disseminating calls for participation in unauthorized mass actions." It provided no other details. In [an interview for the Gazeta.ru news site](#), [Grani.ru](#) CEO **Yulia Berezovskaya** said she had not idea what the offending content was. She also said she had received no prior warning or explanation from Roskomnadzor.

According to Roskomnadzor, Alexei Navalny's blog violated his house arrest order. Navalny is charged with embezzlement and, on 28 February, a court prohibited him from leaving his home or using any means for communication. To get round the ban, Navalny said he had asked his wife and colleagues to update the blog on the basis of the notes he gave them.

Internet users in several parts of Russia [also said](#) this evening that the *Echoes of Moscow* independent radio station was blocked. The radio station's editor-in-chief, **Alexei Venediktov**, [said on Twitter](#) that the Akado and Biznessviaholding access providers were blocking it. But for the time being it is not on the [unified register of banned content](#) and Reporters Without Borders has not been able to obtain any further information.

(Image: Screen capture from Roskomnadzor website)

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