
Russia: State Duma seeking to tighten its grip on press freedom and journalists

Stricter censorship rules are coming from Russia's State Duma against media freedom. According to independent media reports, Russia's MPs adopted at first reading a bill which gives the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation or his delegates power to revoke foreign media licenses and the accreditation of foreign journalists and foreign correspondents. The reasons may include "the dissemination of illegal and dangerous information, including unreliable socially significant information", "information aimed at discrediting Russia's military forces", information related to "the imposition of political and economic sanctions by foreign States against the Russian Federation", "calls for unauthorized demonstrations", "justification of extremism", and "clear lack of respect for state powers", the Russian Constitution or values. It will also "be punishable to quote even literally" incriminated information. Under the bill, if Russian media outlets are banned abroad, the Prosecutor General will be able to ban the activities of foreign publications and channels, including on the Internet, as a form of retaliation. According to rbc.ru, the Human Rights Council called the bill "contrary to the Constitution, which prohibits censorship".

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