

Internet Freedoms

Article 29 in the Constitution of the Russian Federation states that everyone has a right for the freedom of thoughts and speech. This article also formally prohibits censorship. However, in the very same article there is a point which contradicts the other two, being prohibition of any speech which ignites social, religious and political hate. The latter point is not defined anyhow and technically a lot of information which would generally fall under free speech can qualify as hate speech. According to Federal Law N 32-FZ from 2022, spread of misinformation is prohibited under the Article 207.3 in Russian Criminal code and violation of this article may result in up to 15 years of custodial duty. This article was widely condemned by the Human Rights Council in CCPR/C/RUS/CO/8* document. Reasons for that are listed as the lack of legal definitions, violation of basic human rights, too harsh sentences and the fact that this article enables the state to use any means of censorship. According to the Blacklist created by Federal Law N 32-FZ, there are 800 thousand web sources banned on the territory of the Russian Federation. This article also requires internet providers to collect data on their users and share any suspicious activities with Rospotrebnadzor, which often lead to illegitimate arrests. In 2022 Vladimir Kara-Murza - Russian opposition leader was sentenced to 25 years of custodial duty due to his internet activities.

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Religious Freedoms

According to the constitution, the Russian Federation is a secular state. No religion can be established as official (Article 14), Freedom of conscience and religion is guaranteed to anyone (article 28). However, the Russian Orthodox church plays a big role in both internal and external politics with Patriarch Kirill being one of the most influential people in the country. Consequently anti-blaphemy laws play a very important role in Russian society. The core of these laws is Criminal Code Article 148, which prohibits obstruction of religious activities, disrespect to temples or inappropriate behaviour around temples. The article was heavily amended into its modern form after the Pussy Riot case, when in 2012 a Russian group performed anti-Putin songs at Vasiliy Blazhenov Temple next to the Red Square and were sentenced to 13 years of custodial duty. From the recent cases a student of Stroganov Russian State University was expelled after filming an inappropriate TikTok in front of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior and was sentenced to 11 months of labor duty.

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