

Official Criticizes Proposed U.S. Internet Law

January 19, 2012

The  Moscow Times

Communications and Press Minister Igor Shchyogolev said in an op-ed published Friday that the proposed U.S. Internet legislation known as SOPA could become a censorship tool and is therefore in opposition to democratic principles.

"It is impossible to block and censor the Internet—otherwise it simply loses its point," Shchyogolev said, writing in business daily Vedomosti.

The opinion that Russia seeks strict control over the Internet is inaccurate, the communications minister said.

He added that the government is not considering the step of closing access to Twitter and Facebook in case of public demonstrations. Last month's demonstrations protesting the recent State Duma elections were organized in part with the use of Facebook.

Last month popular social network Vkontakte received a request from the Federal Security Service to shut down groups that call for street fights or revolution. The site said it can block

individual users only if they call for violence.

Russia last month effectively blocked a U.S.-supported project to adopt a declaration of Internet freedoms at a meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe last month.

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