

Putin Signs Defamation Law

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President Vladimir Putin has signed into law a bill that drastically raises penalties for defamation.

The measure, which Putin approved on Monday, raises fines for slander and libel to up to 5 million rubles (\$150,000) or 480 hours of community service.

Critics say the new law is the government's latest effort to staunch a flood of anti-government activism that began after State Duma elections in December.

Defamation was decriminalized in December as part of then-President Dmitry Medvedev's liberalizing reforms, which also softened punishments for economic crimes.

(MT)

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