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Russian Government Media Watchdog Deems Navalny's United Russia Video Harmful to Children

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Alexei Navalny

Russia's media watchdog Roskomnadzor has added a video calling President Vladimir Putin's United Russia a “party of crooks and thieves” to a list of banned web pages, claiming it violated the regulatory law that protects children from information harmful to their health and development, Russian opposition firebrand Alexei Navalny wrote on his blog on Friday.

Navalny said that he received an email from the administration of YouTube, where the video was uploaded, warning him that Roskomnadzor had requested the removal of the video.

“I started thinking, what kind of video [did] I have in my account that was harming children's health and development?” Navalny wrote on his blog. “Do you know what video [it was]? The legendary one about 'United Russia — party of crooks and thieves,'” he added.

The two-minute video, uploaded to Navalny's YouTube account in 2011, cited a United Russia party manifesto published in 2002. The manifesto promised, among other things, that by 2008 every family in Russia would have their own place to live, and that by 2017 Russia would become a world political and economic leader.

According to the video, none of these promises were kept. It concluded that United Russia had lied to its voters and, therefore, was "a party of crooks and thieves."

Roskomnadzor blocked the video, Navalny claimed, but at the time of this article's publication, it was still available on YouTube. According to the official website of Roskomnadzor, the video was added to the list of banned web pages on May 8.

Distribution of extremist materials is subject to a fine of between 1,000 and 3,000 rubles ($16 to $47) or 15 days in prison. An organization found guilty faces a fine of 50,000 to 100,000 rubles ($781-$1,562) or a 90-day suspension of operations.

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