

Russian Official Calls for Laws Against Online Suicide Groups

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Yelena Mizulina

An ultraconservative Russian lawmaker has called for new legislation against pro-suicide groups online, the state-owned TASS news agency reported Monday.

Yelena Mizulina, from the Just Russia party, backed reports claiming teenagers are being driven to suicide by groups on social media sites.

“It is unacceptable that such information is being spread so widely and freely,” the lawmaker told journalists. She also said that social networks should develop special mechanisms to ban communities that threaten the well-being of users, TASS reported.

Media reports have claimed that roughly 130 teenagers with membership in certain social network groups have committed suicide since November last year. The group owners systematically “worked” with the victims in order to convince them to commit suicide, the report’s authors believe.

Russia has more teen suicides than any other European country, with the number of incidents increasing more than a third in recent years, Mizulina said.

Last year the government-affiliated Safe Internet League revealed increasing numbers of pro-suicide groups online. Russian consumer watchdog Rospotrebnadzor closed about 70,000 potentially dangerous websites in 2015 for publishing information on committing suicide, yet officials warn that their popularity continues to grow.

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