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Opposition Calls for Rally Against New Russian Anti-Terror Laws

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Leonid Volkov, an ally of opposition activist Alexei Navalny, has ⊠requested permission from Moscow City Hall to hold a rally against ⊠controversial new anti-terror laws.

The request, posted on Volkov's website Monday, says that roughly ⊠2,000 people could attend the rally on the evening of July 26, to ⊠"protect the freedom of Internet in Russia" from censorship and ⊠surveillance.

If approved, the rally will be held on Slavyanskaya ⊠Ploshchad in central Moscow, close to the offices of Russia's Internet ⊠and media watchdog Roskomnadzor.

Volkov, the head of the Russian Society for the Protection of the ⊠Internet, said that he hoped protesters would be joined by other ⊠organizations affected by the new laws. "This rally will be in defense ⊠of the Internet — a meeting of professionals and users, providers, IT ⊠and telecom companies — those who were ignored by the State Duma, ⊠Federation Council and the President," he told the RBC news site.

A package of amendments to Russian anti-terrorist legislation, put ⊠forward by ultraconservative United Russian lawmaker Irina Yarovaya, ⊠were signed by President Vladimir Putin last week.

The new laws will oblige mobile operators and Internet-companies to ⊠store users' data — including photo and video messages — for six months.⊠ Internet companies will also face a fine of up to 1 million rubles ⊠($15,700) if they refuse to decode their users' data at the request of ⊠the Russian Security Services (FSB.)

Four Russian major mobile operators — MTS, Beeline, MegaFon and ⊠Tele2 — have claimed that communication tariffs will double when ⊠Yarovaya's package comes into force, and called for the amendments to be revoked.

The package also introduces a number of other new laws, including ⊠restrictions on religious activity, increases the number of crimes with ⊠which children aged between 14 and 17 can be charged, and the ability to⊠ prosecute citizens for not informing the government of terrorist ⊠activities.

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