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Bill Outlawing Pro-Suicide Groups on Social Media Adopted by Russian Parliament

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A bill outlining criminal liability for creating pro-suicide groups in social networks has passed its third and final reading on Friday, Russian news outlets reported. The lawmakers unanimously voted for the legislative initiative put forward by Irina Yarovaya, an ultraconservative lawmaker from the ruling United Russia party.

Russian officials have been calling for a law against pro-suicide online groups since May last year, when the Novaya Gazeta newspaper reported that roughly 130 teenagers with membership in certain social network groups have committed suicide. The group owners systematically "worked" with the victims in order to convince them to commit suicide, the report's authors claimed.

The article was widely criticized for exaggerating the problem, yet a founder of one such group, Fillip Budeikin, was arrested in November for pushing a 16-year-old girl into

committing suicide. ⊠Budeikin pled guilty and is currently in pre-trial detention.

Yarovaya's bill introduced three new articles to Russia's Criminal⊠Code outlining punishment for inciting to commit suicide or assisting⊠in committing suicide (up to four years in prison) and for engaging⊠minors in activities that threaten their lives (up to three years in⊠prison).

Human rights activists fear that the new law will be used to⊠further crackdown on Internet freedom in Russia.

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