

Russians Rally Against Internet Crackdown

July 24, 2017



YouTube

Protesters took to the streets in central Moscow on Sunday to demonstrate against stringent laws regulating the internet while calling for the release of Russians detained for their activity online and on social media.

Opposition party PARNAS, which was among the organizers, [said](#) 3,000 demonstrators attended the rally, titled "For a Free Internet." The Internal Ministry said 800 people protested.

Protesters held signs reading "Free speech everywhere and always," "Truth is stronger than censorship," and "Down with the police state."

Two demonstrators were detained briefly by police, according to [OVD Info](#). One was distributing leaflets in support of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, another held a sign reading: "The Internet Without Putin."

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[#СоколовскийНеТеррорист pic.twitter.com/OU7OiPb5gv](#)

— Протестная Москва (@nedimon_msk) [July 23, 2017](#)

Protesters chant "Sokolovsky is not a terrorist," referring to a YouTube blogger [convicted of extremism](#) for playing Pokemon Go in an Orthodox church.

Alexander Zharov, the head of the federal agency that regulates media and communications, Roskomnadzor, was one of the main targets of the protests, with protesters calling for his resignation, RBC reported.

Demonstrators also demanded fair trials for individuals convicted of sharing content deemed offensive or extremist by state bodies.

In a [report](#) published last week, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said that Russian authorities have clamped down on internet freedoms and introduced “invasive surveillance” online, under the pretext of fighting extremism.

The report criticized Russian authorities for unjustly imprisoning dozens of people based on their activity online and for introducing new laws that “restrict access to information, carry out unchecked surveillance and censor information the government designates as ‘extremist.’”

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