Internet Censorship Skyrockets in Russia in 2017, Study Says

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Internet freedom in Russia has continued its downward spiral over the past year with over 115,000 recorded cases of censorship, according to an internet and media freedom report published Monday.

The report by the Agora international human rights group was published half a year before new anti-terror legislation comes into force, which will greatly expand state powers of surveillance over internet correspondence. Under the "Yarovaya Law," Russian telecom and internet providers will be forced to store all user communication data for 3 years.

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"Throughout 2017, Russian authorities have repeatedly outlawed internet activity that was previously [considered] normal," Agora said in its report published Monday.

Out of the more than 115,000 cases of Internet censorship last year, Agora said 110,000 were related to blocked websites, with an average 244 web pages being blocked per day by the authorities in 2017.

Every six days, an internet user would be subject to threats or physical attack, while courts handed down prison sentences related to internet censorship every eight days, the report estimated.

In the past 10 years, more than 200 cases of violence were recorded against bloggers, activists and journalists, including five murders, the NGO said.