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Russia Drops to 149th out of 180 Countries in World Press Freedom Index

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Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency

Russia has been rated 149th out of 180 countries for press freedom, according to an annual index published by international media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

Russia and Turkey (ranked 157th) continue to be the biggest players in the suppression of free speech in the region, RSF researchers said. A recently passed law that punishes "fake news," efforts to block websites, arbitrary arrests of journalists, police violence and state pressure on independent media have influenced Russia's position in the ranking.

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Russia fell one place in the index published on Thursday, ranking below countries such as Venezuela and the Central African Republic.

"By constantly trampling on fundamental freedoms, Russia's legislators are themselves at

the forefront of disrespect for society and the state," Johann Bihr, the head of RSF's Eastern Europe and Central Asia desk, said in a release.

Only 24 percent of the countries analyzed in RSF's index earned a "satisfactory" or "good" press freedom rating.

The World Press Freedom Index is based on an evaluation of media freedom that measures pluralism, media independence, the quality of the legal framework and the safety of journalists in 180 countries. It is not an indicator of the quality of journalism in each country.

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