

Russia Bans ‘Discussions’ of Fake Coronavirus News

April 23, 2020



Putin has previously said that fake news reports about the coronavirus were being sent to Russia from abroad to spread panic. **Sergei Fadeichev / TASS**

Russia’s Supreme Court has [ruled](#) it illegal to discuss “fake news” about the deadly coronavirus pandemic in public in addition to publishing it.

Facing public mistrust toward the country’s relatively low infection numbers at the time, Russia made spreading false information about Covid-19 punishable by up to [five years in jail](#) starting April 1.

Related article: [Russian News Outlets Ordered to Take Down ‘Fake’ Coronavirus News](#)

In an explanatory note published Tuesday, the Supreme Court said the punishments extend to individuals who “not only use mass media and telecommunication networks, but also speak at meetings, rallies, distribute leaflets and hang posters.”

The law does not apply if the questionable information was published or discussed publicly before April 1, the court explained.

Russian prosecutors [said](#) they have uncovered more than 300 pieces of “fake news” about Covid-19 since February.

More than 260 websites were either blocked or have deleted the false information, the Prosecutor General’s Office was quoted as saying Wednesday. Authorities requested Russia’s media watchdog to block 80 websites for spreading “false information of public significance that threatened people’s health and lives.”

The legislation signed by President Vladimir Putin also punishes people for breaking coronavirus quarantine rules by up to seven years in prison.

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Russia [confirmed](#) 4,774 new coronavirus infections on Thursday, bringing the country’s official number of cases to 62,773.

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