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# Russian Lawmakers Pursue New Powers to Close 'Disrespectful' Media

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Russia's lower House of Parliament, the state Duma. **duma.gov.ru**

Russian lawmakers have proposed new legislation allowing them to shutter media outlets that "disrespect" the country's government — even without a court order.

Russian authorities already have the power to ban publications that "discredit" the Russian military and other state bodies abroad, but need a court ruling in order to do so.

The draft bill submitted to Russia's lower house of parliament Wednesday removes that requirement, giving prosecutors the green light to revoke outlets' media licenses.

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The proposed bill also holds Russian journalists responsible for citing what the Kremlin believes to be "fake news" published by other outlets.

The move would effectively bar Russian journalists from quoting foreign publications that call the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine "a war."

"They want to prohibit us from citing The New York Times, Der Spiegel, Le Monde and other colleagues," Yelena Chernenko, a reporter for the Kommersant business daily, wrote on Telegram.

The proposed legislation has been described as a "tit-for-tat" response to other countries' closure of Russian media outlets following the invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24. The European Union banned Russian state-run broadcaster RT and the Sputnik news agency on Feb. 27, while Britain revoked RT's license on March 18.

"This will be a manifestation of justice toward our journalists who have been discriminated against," Vasily Piskaryov, whose parliamentary commission on foreign interference submitted the bill, said Tuesday.

But Russian journalists decried the move as draconian.

Chernenko described the move as an "information blockade," while her colleague, reporter Yury Litvinenko, warned that the bill's "implications are even more grave than any repressive action against journalism in Russia taken up to this point."

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Although the bill still needs approval from both houses of Russia's parliament as well as President Vladimir Putin, other recent legislation stifling Russia's war coverage has been fast-tracked through the parliamentary system.

Last month, Putin approved a bill introducing jail terms of up to 15 years for those who spread "fake news" about the Russian military. The law has already led to several arrests, including those of teachers and a police officer.

Since the start of its war with Ukraine, Russia has blocked at least 32 foreign and domestic news websites, including the BBC. Many of the country's remaining independent outlets have also suspended operations after being accused of spreading "unreliable" information that does not come from "official Russian information outlets."

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