Russia Will Block VPN Services in March, Says Safe Internet League Chief Mizulina

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Yekaterina Mizulina. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Russian authorities will "most likely" start blocking major VPN services in March, the head of the Kremlin-aligned Safe Internet League said Monday.

Downloads of VPNs, which help users access blocked websites, surged in Russia after authorities started blocking Western social media platforms and scores of Russian independent news outlets amid the invasion of Ukraine.

"VPNs, especially those that are free, they're a total portal into hell ... It's a big black hole in your device," Safe Internet League head Yekaterina Mizulina told a group of high school students in the city of Yekaterinburg.

When asked about rumors that the Russian government may be planning to block VPNs by March 1, she replied: "Yes ... that's most likely the case."

Related article: [Government Campaign Aims to Warn Russians Against VPN Use](#)

Mizulina then clarified that while it would be "technically impossible" for authorities to block VPNs "entirely," they would target some of the most popular services.

She added that the authorities seek to safeguard "people and gadgets" by banning free VPNs.

Last year, Russian authorities [launched a campaign](#) to warn the public about what they say are the dangers of using VPN services, such as opening up devices to hackers that can then access personal data.

But observers say the campaign is aimed at stifling free speech and limiting access to independent news sources.

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