

## 1.2. State control over information and media

### 1.2. State control over information and media

Since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russian authorities have increased restrictions imposed on media.<sup>[42](#)</sup> In February 2022, *Roskomnadzor* – the Russian federal executive agency in charge of media supervision<sup>[43](#)</sup> – instructed media outlets to avoid using the terms ‘attack’, ‘invasion’, and ‘war’<sup>[44](#)</sup> and to use solely information from the Russian Ministry of Defence (MoD).<sup>[45](#)</sup> Officially, the Russian government refers to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine as a ‘special military operation’ (Russian: *SVO*),<sup>[46](#)</sup> even after the authorities have acknowledged that ‘it became a war’ in February<sup>[47](#)</sup> and March 2024.<sup>[48](#)</sup>

Independent reporting from Russia has become increasingly restricted due to laws criminalising criticism of the military<sup>[49](#)</sup> and the government.<sup>[50](#)</sup> Many independent media outlets and human rights groups have been closed or designated as ‘foreign agents’ or ‘undesirable organisations’.<sup>[51](#)</sup> The authorities have continued to tighten online censorship,<sup>[52](#)</sup> blocking ‘thousands of websites’ – including those of independent media, human rights organisations, and opposition politicians – for allegedly violating the legislation on online activity.<sup>[53](#)</sup> In July 2025, as reported by Reuters, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov defended the censorship, acknowledging it as ‘unprecedented’ for Russia but justified due to the war in Ukraine. According to Reuters, Peskov ‘noted the closure of many media outlets and the emigration of some reporters, stating that ‘the war is going on in the information space too.’<sup>[54](#)</sup>

As of early August 2025, the Russian NGO that monitors internet freedom, *Roskomsvoboda*,<sup>[55](#)</sup> reported that over 25 000 websites and links have been blocked due to ‘war censorship’, according to the national blacklist registry, with about 5 000 sources added since August 2024. This list includes both Russian and international media sources.<sup>[56](#)</sup> In September 2025, the UN Special Rapporteur noted that *Roskomnadzor* monitors ‘online content to identify shifting political opinions, track dissent and suppress political activity,’ reporting that in 2025 the authorities blocked 410 online resources linked to ‘undesirable organisations’ and 87 linked to ‘foreign agents’.<sup>[57](#)</sup> For information about ‘undesirable organisations’ and ‘foreign agents’, see chapter [Legislation on undesirable organisations and foreign agents](#).

In line with the political agenda, books, films, theatre, and television productions were censored or withdrawn for addressing same-sex relationships and other prohibited topics, or due to authors’ designations as ‘foreign agents’.<sup>[58](#)</sup> Furthermore, media outlets frequently use self-censorship, avoiding topics like homosexuality and religion to align with the state’s conservative stance.<sup>[59](#)</sup>

CPI, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

[43](#)

Bloomberg, Federal Service for Supervision of Communications Information Tech & Mass Media, n.d., [url](#)

[44](#)

IPI, Roskomnadzor threatens to block media and bans use of “war” and “invasion” in reporting, 26 February 2022, [url](#)

[45](#)

RSF, Russian regulator censors Ukraine war coverage, reporters told to toe Kremlin line, 1 March 2022, [url](#)

[46](#)

Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

[47](#)

Reuters, Putin addresses Russia’s parliament, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

[48](#)

Reuters, Explainer: Why is Russia changing its language about the war?, 22 March 2024, [url](#); Meduza, ‘We are at war’: Putin spokesman says invasion of Ukraine has grown beyond ‘special military operation’, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

[49](#)

Reuters, Kremlin says wartime censorship is justified, 11 July 2025, [url](#)

[50](#)

CPI, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

[51](#)

AP, Putin signs a bill punishing online searches for information deemed ‘extremist’, 31 July 2025, [url](#)

[52](#)

HRW, Russia – Events of 2024, 17 January 2025, [url](#)

[53](#)

HRW, Disrupted, Throttled, and Blocked. State Censorship, Control, and Increasing Isolation of Internet Users in Russia, 30 July 2025, [url](#)

[54](#)

Reuters, Kremlin says wartime censorship is justified, 11 July 2025, [url](#)

[55](#)

Roskomsvoboda is a Russian ‘public organisation’ established in 2012, which monitors ‘the legislative activities of government agencies in the field of Internet regulation as well as its enforcement’, see Roskomsvoboda, About us, [url](#)

[56](#)

Roskomsvoboda, 25 000 ????????? — ????? ?????? ?????? ?????? [25 000 blockings – a new record for military censorship], 5 August 2025, [url](#)

[57](#)

UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova, 15 September 2025, [url](#), para. 69

[58](#)

AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

[59](#)

RSF, Russia, n.d., [url](#)