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Blocking Internet sites as a threat to freedom of speech

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The Ukrainian president, Petro Poroshenko, has banned the country's most popular websites, search engines and social networks. A decree by Poroshenko posted on 7th of May 2017 expanded sanctions adopted over Russia.

Among the websites blocked are:

- Vkontakte, the largest social network in Europe and the third most popular site in Ukraine (source: TNS Ukraine, March-April 2017);
- Mail.Ru, the largest Russian email service and the fourth most popular site in Ukraine (source: TNS Ukraine, March-April 2017);
- Yandex, a search engine company providing more than 50 different services, the fifth most popular site in Ukraine (source: TNS Ukraine, March-April 2017);
- Odnoklassniki, a social network, the ninth most popular site in Ukraine (source: TNS Ukraine, March-April 2017);
- And other popular Russian-language services, such as Kinopoisk.ru, a Russian-language Internet project dedicated to the cinema, Auto.ru, the largest and oldest website about cars in the Russian-language segment of the Internet, etc.

Among other things, the restrictions affected the services of ABBYY company (the publisher of electronic dictionaries) and companies dealing with Internet security, such as Kaspersky Lab and DrWeb.

The blocking of social networks, search engines, email services and news websites is contrary to the common understanding of freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

The blocking of Russian sites and social networks can be regarded as an attempt of the Ukrainian authorities to control public discourse in Ukraine.

Such kind of bans affects the right to receive information for millions of Ukrainians and interfering with their personal and professional lives. These actions of Ukrainian authorities have dealt a terrible blow to freedom of speech in the country. This violates the rights of citizens of Ukraine to obtain information on their choice.