



Short Russian Wikipedia Block

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Timeline

- 28.07.2012 — Internet Black list infrastructure establishing 139-FZ law.
- 12.2012, 10.2013, 2.2014 — dismissed court cases on earlier stages.
- 25.06.2015 — the court ruling, prohibiting the Чарас (Charas) article in Wikipedia.
- 18.08.2015 — we received the official order to remove the Charas from Russian Wikipedia.
- 24.08.2015 — Wikipedia blocked.
- 25.08.2015 — 7 hours later Wikipedia unblocked.

Why blocked?

- There are **29 articles that were included in the list** of restricted sites earlier, but Wikipedia haven't been blocked earlier.
- This case is different by that it's is the **first time where there was a court ruling**, not a governmental agency decision.

Why unblocked?

- The main hypothesis is that the regulator **didn't wish to block at all, and just formally fulfilled the ruling**: the ruling contained only order to block, but no any limitations on conditions to be met for unblocking.
- Secondary hypothesis is that the **decision to block was induced by relatively minor personell**, when superiors were on vacations; after the superiors returned, they decided to unblock after a short blocking, because the blocking was announced earlier.
- Another hypothesis is that they **didn't know about use of HSTS** by Wikipedia, and supposed that there are way to go around HTTPS.

Our position — the core

- **Wikipedia is but a mirror, which reflects the encyclopedic knowledge**, accumulated by mankind in the form of open reputable publications and resources materials.
- Wikipedia does not assume responsibility for creating new knowledge or trying to distinguish the "right" from the "wrong" – in this matter **Wikipedia relies entirely on the sources.**
- If reputable sources - academic, governmental, international, news and the like - contain information that meets the encyclopedic format, **this information get considered as worth presenting to the readers.**

Our position — other details

- We **believe that the position of the Russian legislator is similar** – not the dissemination of whatever information as such is prohibited, but only a distribution that includes the promotion of harmful acts or other unfair actions.
- Wikipedia is a pan-world project that cannot and will **not meet the censorship requirements** in individual countries, no matter what.
- Therefore it's better to be blocked than to allow the censorship. The only possible reaction is to improve the articles in question **in accordance with rules of Wikipedia.**

Our actions

- Russian Wikipedia community heavily **edited the Charas article**.
- Russian Wikipedia community discussed and again consensually **confirmed the position** described above.
- **Russian Wikipedia community acted**: links to resources describing how to avoid blocs published and IP-block-exempt flags issued.
- **Wikimedia RU expressed the position** publicly and in appeal to the regulator.
- Wikimedia RU informed that the **article** in question had been heavily **edited and based on scholarly sources**.

Post-block events

- Wikimedia RU issued a thorough **public statement describing the position in details** (in Russian and English).
- After this the head or the PR department of **the regulator** gave a first comment regards the situation, in which the position — that not the dissemination of whatever information as such is not prohibited by the Russian law, but only a distribution that includes the promotion of harmful acts or other unfair actions is prohitod — was **to some extent expressed as well**.

THANKS!

- Thank you for your attention!
- Please ask your questions.
- You can contact me anytime by e-mail:
<mailto:vladimir.medeyko@wikimedia.ru>
- Wikimedia RU mentioned above may be found here:
<https://ru.wikimedia.org/wiki/block2015en>
- You may find it interesting to explore a new site on Wikimedia Movement policies, including the position on censorship of Wikipedia:
<https://policy.wikimedia.org/policy-landing/censorship/>