Short Russian Wikipedia Block

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Timeline

- 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 hasn'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 prohibited — 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/