

Cyber Challenges to International Human Rights

Title: “Bloggers Law” and Online Freedom of Expression in Russia

Name: Oleg Soldatov

Institution: Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi (Milan, Italy), PhD researcher in Legal Studies (International Law and Economics curriculum)

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Abstract:

In May 2014 the Russian Parliament enacted the Federal Law No. 97-FZ (the so-called “Bloggers Law”). This piece of legislation, which was passed with the justification of curbing the terrorist threat, requires compulsory registration of all bloggers with more than 3 000 visits a day with the country’s Internet watchdog, Roskomnadzor, leading to disclosure of their real identities to the State authorities. Moreover, according to this law the bloggers have to abide by the same rules as journalists, including, among other things, an obligation to verify information before publishing it. The Bloggers Law faced numerous criticisms: while the discussion as to whether there is indeed a legal right to online anonymity is still far from being concluded, the law makes anonymous blogging an impossible undertaking in Russia. In the paper the author attempts to: (a) analyse the reasoning behind the Federal Law No. 97-FZ; (b) disentangle and contextualise the most controversial provisions of the Bloggers Law point by point; (c) assess its effectiveness drawing conclusions from the events that happened in the Russian blogosphere in 2014-2017; (d) speculate whether other countries might choose to follow Russia’s example.