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Freedom on the Net 2025 - Ukraine



Key Developments, June 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025

The February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian military continued to impact internet freedom in the country. Russian military attacks have caused severe damage to Ukraine's internet infrastructure. The Ukrainian government continued to block a wide variety of Russian and Kremlin-backed websites including blogs and news outlets, social media sites, and sites that provide other services. Additionally, Ukrainian courts have handed down jail sentences to individuals accused of crimes under Ukrainian law including producing pro-Kremlin propaganda, collaborating with the Russian government to produce online content, and posting information online about evading the draft. Cyberattacks by Russian-based actors against state institutions, critical infrastructure, and the media remained routine.

- The Kyiv School of Economics Institute estimated that the telecommunications sector had sustained \$1.2 billion in damage between the start of the Kremlin's full-scale invasion in February 2022 and November 2024 (A1).¹
- In March 2025, the National Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting ordered the blocking of 217 websites linked to 5 previously sanctioned Russian media outlets (B1).²
- In January 2025, the Cabinet of Ministers issued an order that allows the National Center for Operational Management of Telecommunications Networks (NCON) to directly block websites in times of martial law. Previously, NCON had the authority to order service providers to restrict access to resources (B1 and B3).³
- In December 2024, the Kyiv Court of Appeals upheld the Pechersk District Court's ruling that compelled the online outlet *Hromadske* to remove an investigative report questioning whether Andrii Portnov, a former government official in the Viktor Yanukovich administration who had repeatedly used his influence to intimidate journalists, had collaborated with the Russian government during the 2014 occupation of Crimea (B2).⁴
- Meta's February 2025 Adversarial Threat Report found that a long-running, Russia-based influence operation that promoted Russian narratives about the Ukraine invasion had changed its target audiences. The operation, called Doppelganger, used various platforms to direct users to fake websites that purported to be news outlets such as Germany's *Bild* and the British public broadcaster BBC, but which spread pro-Russian narratives. Meta said Doppelganger had moved away from targeting users in Ukraine, Poland, and the United States on its platforms, and had ramped up targeting of audiences

in France, Germany, and Israel. Meta noted that the campaign continued to target people in Ukraine on other platforms (B5).⁵

- In October 2024, online news outlet *Ukrainska Pravda* reported that the Ukrainian president's office had pressured businesses to stop advertising with it, restricted officials from communicating with the outlet, and prevented reporters from the outlet from participating in official events (B6).⁶
- In December 2024, Ukraine's military computer emergency response team (CERT-UA) reported that hackers linked to the Sandworm operation, run by a group in Russia's military intelligence unit (GRU), had launched a phishing campaign attempting to get soldiers to download a fake version of the Army+ application, which is used by the Ukrainian military to handle bureaucratic matters (C8).⁷

Political Overview

The Russian armed forces launched an illegal all-out invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, inflicting massive civilian and military casualties and destroying civilian infrastructure. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy declared martial law immediately after the full-scale invasion. Under this designation, scheduled parliamentary and presidential elections have been postponed and other rights remain restricted. The current administration has enacted a number of positive reforms as part of a drive to strengthen democratic institutions, but the country still struggles with corruption in the government, the judiciary, and other sectors.

Note

To align this survey with Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* survey, previous editions of *Freedom on the Net* have excluded Russian-occupied eastern Donbas, based on boundaries established prior to the Kremlin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and Crimea from its coverage. That practice has continued in the 2025 edition, and *Freedom on the Net* also excluded parts of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia that are under Russian military control to align with the 2025 *Freedom in the World* report. The numerical scores and status listed here reflect conditions in government-controlled areas of Ukraine, and do not reflect conditions in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine. Disputed or occupied territories are sometimes assessed separately by *Freedom in the World* if they meet certain criteria, including boundaries that are sufficiently stable to allow year-on-year comparisons. For more information, see the report methodology and FAQ. Readers can access Freedom House's criteria for evaluating territories separately [here](#).

This report has been abridged for Freedom on the Net 2025 due to [ongoing budget constraints](#). Please consider making a [donation](#) to support future editions of this vital resource.

For additional background information, see last year's [full report](#).

A Obstacles to Access

A1 0-6 pts

Do infrastructural limitations restrict access to the internet or the speed and quality of internet connections?

4 /
6

A2 0-3 pts

Is access to the internet prohibitively expensive or beyond the reach of certain segments of the population for geographical, social, or other reasons?	2 / 3
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A3 0-6 pts

Does the government exercise technical or legal control over internet infrastructure for the purposes of restricting connectivity?	5 / 6
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Score Change: The score improved from 4 to 5 because the 2025 edition of the report excludes areas in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia where the Russian military has taken control of the internet infrastructure.

A4 0-6 pts

Are there legal, regulatory, or economic obstacles that restrict the diversity of service providers?	5 / 6
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A5 0-4 pts

Do national regulatory bodies that oversee service providers and digital technology fail to operate in a free, fair, and independent manner?	3 / 4
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B Limits on Content

B1 0-6 pts

Does the state block or filter, or compel service providers to block or filter, internet content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards?	3 / 6
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B2 0-4 pts

Do state or nonstate actors employ legal, administrative, or other means to force publishers, content hosts, or digital platforms to delete content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards?	2 / 4
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B3 0-4 pts

Do restrictions on the internet and digital content lack transparency, proportionality to the stated aims, or an independent appeals process?	2 / 4
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B4 0-4 pts

Do online journalists, commentators, and ordinary users practice self-censorship?	3 / 4
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B5 0-4 pts

Are online sources of information controlled or manipulated by the government or other powerful actors to advance a particular political interest?	2 / 4
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B6 0-3 pts

Are there economic or regulatory constraints that negatively affect users' ability to publish content online?	2 / 3
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B7 0-4 pts

Does the online information landscape lack diversity and reliability?	3 / 4
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B8 0-6 pts

Do conditions impede users' ability to mobilize, form communities, and campaign, particularly on political and social issues?	5 / 6
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C Violations of User Rights

C1 0-6 pts

Do the constitution or other laws fail to protect rights such as freedom of expression, access to information, and press freedom, including on the internet, and are they enforced by a judiciary that lacks independence?	3 / 6
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C2 0-4 pts

Are there laws that assign criminal penalties or civil liability for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards?	2 / 4
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C3 0-6 pts

Are individuals penalized for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards?	3 / 6
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C4 0-4 pts

Does the government place restrictions on anonymous communication or encryption?	4 / 4
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Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 because the 2025 edition of the report excludes areas in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia where the Russian military has blocked virtual private networks (VPNs) and end-to-end encrypted messaging applications.

C5 0-6 pts

Does state surveillance of internet activities infringe on users' right to privacy?	3 / 6
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C6 0-6 pts

Does monitoring and collection of user data by service providers and other technology companies infringe on users' right to privacy?	3 / 6
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C7 0-5 pts

Are individuals subject to extralegal intimidation or physical violence by state authorities or any other actor in relation to their online activities?

**2 /
5**

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 because the 2025 edition of the report excludes areas in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia where the Russian military has engaged in brutal attacks against online journalists they have taken into custody.

C8 0-3 pts

Are websites, governmental and private entities, service providers, or individual users subject to widespread hacking and other forms of cyberattack?

**1 /
3**

Footnotes

- **1** Kyiv School of Economics, “Damages to Ukraine’s infrastructure due to the war have risen to \$170 billion — KSE Institute estimate as of November 2024,” February 14, 2025, <https://kse.ua/about-the-school/news/damages-to-ukraine-s-infrastructur...>
- **2** Digital Security Lab Ukraine, “MEDIA AND DIGITAL RIGHTS REGULATION IN UKRAINE Digest #21,” March 2025, https://dslua.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/media_mar25-1.pdf.
- **3** Digital Security Lab Ukraine, “MEDIA AND DIGITAL RIGHTS REGULATION IN UKRAINE Digest #21,” March 2025, https://dslua.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/media_mar25-1.pdf.
- **4** Denis Bulavin, “Суд зобов’язав hromadske видалити розслідування про Портнова: редакція боротиметься далі [The court ordered Hromadske to remove the investigation about Portnov: the editorial office will continue],” Hromadske, December 12, 2024, <https://hromadske.ua/polityka/236171-sud-zoboviazav-hromadske-vydalyty-...>
- **5** Meta, “FOURTH QUARTER Adversarial Threat Report,” February 2025, <https://transparency.fb.com/sr/Q4-2024-Adversarial-threat-report>; Alexandre Alaphilippe, Gary Machado, Raquel Miguel and Francesco Poldi, “Doppelganger – Media clones serving Russian propaganda,” EU DisinfoLab, September 27, 2022, <https://www.disinfo.eu/doppelganger/>.
- **6** “Ukrainska Pravda reports systematic pressure from the Office of the President of Ukraine,” Ukrainska Pravda, October 9, 2024, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/columns/2024/10/09/7478844/>.
- **7** Daryna Antoniuk, “Sandworm-linked hackers target users of Ukraine’s military app in new spying campaign,” The Record, December 19, 2024, <https://therecord.media/ukraine-military-app-espionage-russia-sandworm>.