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Russian Lawmaker Says Bans Are Freeing and Civil Rights Are Restrictive

April 23, 2019

Yelena Mizulina — Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency

As outspoken Russian lawmaker has turned heads for arguing that civil rights are restrictive, while bans are a form of freedom.

Yelena Mizulina, who successfully lobbied for Russia's 2013 "gay propaganda" law and spearheaded efforts to decriminalize domestic violence, made the statement in defense of recent internet restriction laws. On Monday, Russian senators backed tighter internet controls against foreign meddling that critics say could disrupt Russia's internet and be used to stifle dissent.

"What are rights? They're the biggest lack of freedom. I can tell you that the more rights you have, the less free we are," Mizulina argued, using the Russian word that translates as both "rights" and "law."

"A ban is when the person is free because it says 'this is impossible, but with everything else — [you can] do what you want,'" she was quoted as saying at an internet safety forum by the Moskva news agency Monday.

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Observers noted parallels between Mizulina's impassioned statement and George Orwell's — "War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength" quote from his dystopian novel "1984."

Russia has introduced tougher internet laws in the last five years, requiring search engines to delete some search results, messaging services to share encryption keys with security services and social networks to store user data on servers in the country.

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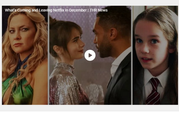

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Lost Polar Bear Airlifted North From Russian Village

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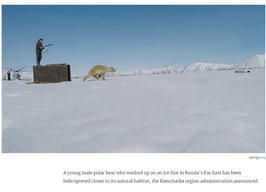
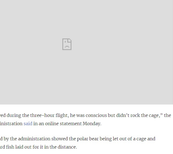


Instagram

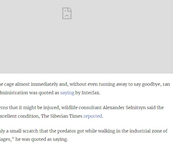
A young male polar bear who washed up on an ice floe in Russia's Far East has been helicoptered closer to its natural habitat, the Kamchatka region administration announced.

Residents of Kamchatka region villages spotted the bear — who was nicknamed Umka after a cartoon polar bear character from a popular Soviet-era animation film — late last week. Authorities vowed to airlift the bear 700 kilometers north to Chukotka autonomous district after sedating it with a tranquilizer.



"Umka behaved during the three-hour flight, he was conscious but didn't rock the cage," the regional administration said in an online statement Monday.

Images shared by the administration showed the polar bear being let out of a cage and running toward fish laid out for it in the distance.



"Umka left the cage almost immediately and, without even turning away to say goodbye, ran away," the administration was quoted as saying by Interfax.

Despite concerns that it might be injured, wildlife consultant Alexander Sebastyan said the animal is in excellent condition, The Siberian Times reported.

"We found only a small scratch that the predator got while walking in the industrial zone of one of the villages," he was quoted as saying.

Kamchatka region Governor Sergei Khabarov said the bear had posed no threat to residents of Kosi and Tilichiki villages.

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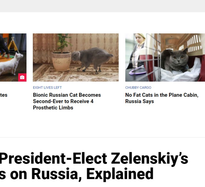
The melting of sea ice triggered by climate change makes dangerous encounters between polar bears and humans more frequent. A recent invasion more than 1,000 kilometers to the west in the remote Arctic settlement of Novaya Zemlya attack panic among locals in February.

Polar bears are classified as an endangered species in Russia.



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Ukraine President-Elect Zelenskiy's Positions on Russia, Explained

April 22, 2019

Volodymyr Zelenskiy — Дуна / Twitt

Volodymyr Zelenskiy will be inaugurated as Ukraine's new president in about a month with questions still swirling about his true policy positions toward neighboring Russia.

A native Russian speaker with no political experience, Zelenskiy has been accused by critics of having adopted a soft stance toward Russian aggression — including the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and Moscow's support for separatists in eastern Ukraine.

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The politician has even been accused of accepting financing from the Kremlin and of being the preferred choice of Russian President Vladimir Putin — who had a cocky relationship with outgoing Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko.

We looked back at Zelenskiy's interviews and public statements to see what the incoming

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