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[Why Facebook just agreed to give its data to Russia's biggest search engine](#) Russia and the former Soviet states at its periphery have remained steadfastly immune to the charms of Facebook. The American social network figures nowhere in a list of [top 10 websites](#) by the number of unique users in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus or the Central Asian 'Stans. Instead, Russians and their neighbors prefer [VKontakte](#), a home-grown social network that, in addition to connecting friends and groups, [also functions as a dating site](#) and offers free streaming movies and music, [much of it pirated](#). VKontakte has over 100 million active users on the Russian internet, or RuNet. **Quartz.** [Read More.](#)

[Twentieth Anniversary of Historic Step to Remove Nuclear Weapons from Ukraine](#) On this day, 20 years ago, the presidents of Ukraine, the United States and the Russian Federation signed a trilateral statement that led to the removal of all nuclear weapons on Ukrainian territory. This achievement built upon the hard work of many on all sides, including then-sitting U.S. Ambassadors Thomas Pickering in Moscow and William Miller in Kyiv. This statement laid the foundation for Ukraine's accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear weapon state on December 5, 1994. **US Department of State.** [Read More.](#)

[Orange Revolution Redux in the Ukraine: America Should Stay Out](#) Nine years after the so-called Orange Revolution against electoral fraud, opponents of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich hope to stage a repeat. But the issue today, whether Kiev aligns economically with Europe or Russia, doesn't much concern the U.S. In 2004 the Orange Revolution helped deliver the presidency to Western-favorite Viktor Yushchenko, a disastrous incompetent. Yanukovich narrowly won the 2009 race. He has been negotiating over an Association Agreement with the European Union. However, Brussels demanded political concessions, most importantly the freeing of opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko, who had been prosecuted by Yanukovich's government, and refused to offer cash assistance. **Cato Institute.** [Read More.](#)

[Ukrainian Opposition Blocks First Parliament Session of New Year](#) Ukrainian opposition parties blocked the first parliament session of 2014, reiterating demands for the government to be dismissed and police to be held accountable for what they call a crackdown on anti-government protesters. Speaker Volodymyr Rybak announced a break until 4 p.m. today in the capital, Kiev, to allow talks with parliamentary groups in his office. He said yesterday that lawmakers may adopt this year's budget -- due for a vote in two days -- without deliberations should opposition. **Bloomberg.** [Read More.](#)

[Europe lost Ukrainian leadership, but gained Ukrainian people - Lithuanian president](#) Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė has said that Europe, after the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius, "lost the Ukrainian leadership, but gained the Ukrainian people," and future relations between Kyiv and Brussels will depend only on their political will. The head of the Lithuanian state, which presided at the EU in the second half of 2013, said this at a press conference in Strasbourg on Tuesday, while speaking about the results of the Eastern Partnership summit, which was held in Vilnius on November 28-29. "After this summit Ukraine will not be the same as it was before, and the Ukrainian people will also not be the same. We really lost the current leadership of Ukraine, but we gained the Ukrainian people, we gained their fight for the future," Grybauskaitė said. **Interfax-Ukraine.** [Read More.](#)

[Euromaidan in Kyiv confirms EU's importance and values, says Barroso](#) European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso has said that the pro-European protests in Kyiv have demonstrated the importance of the European Union as "a beacon of hope and values." He said this at a plenary sitting of the European Parliament in Strasbourg on Tuesday, which was dedicated to the review of the Lithuanian Presidency in the EU. The European Commission's president said that one of the most important moments of the Vilnius Summit, occurred not only in Vilnius, but on the streets of Kyiv. **Interfax-Ukraine.** [Read More.](#)

[Repression over AutoMaidan hits even those who weren't there](#) Lawyer Taras Huk reports on facebook that Serhiy Lukyanchuk, a driver who was not even on the AutoMaidan car procession to Mezhyhirya on Dec 29 has been stripped of his licence for 3 months. Huk says that traffic police arrived at his home twice and talked through the intercom system with his parents who gave no information. No summons was sent, yet then on Friday he received a court summons for Monday, Jan 13. This means, he says, that the protocol was drawn up in Lukyanchuk's absence and that the report was falsified since Lukyanchuk was in the Cherkasy oblast on Dec 29 which was confirmed in court by two witnesses. Huk says that the court heard all details regarding the procedural infringements in the case, yet still stripped Lukyanchuk of his licence for 3 months. The decision will be appealed. **Human Rights in Ukraine.** [Read More.](#)

[Journalists summoned to traffic police over protest at Mezhyhirya](#) Several journalists who took part in a picket of the president's highly controversial residence at Mezhyhirya on Dec 29 have received summonses to the traffic police. On Jan 10 journalist from the Institute for Mass Information, Iryna Chulivska was summoned for the next day to have a protocol drawn up regarding a supposed administrative offence and temporary confiscation of her driving licence. She told Telekritika that she didn't go. The summons arrived less than a day before the stipulated time, and she wasn't even in Lviv that day. "Secondly, the summons did not say what exactly I was supposed to have infringed, or when, or where, and which car I was supposed to have been driving". She says that at present she doesn't plan to do anything. **Human Rights in Ukraine.** [Read More.](#)

[Brussels to continue partnership treaty dialog once Kyiv shows clear commitment to sign](#) Brussels will continue the dialog with Kyiv on the preparations for the signing of the Association Agreement as soon as the Ukrainian authorities show clear commitment to do this. Spokesman for EU Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy Commissioner Stefan Fule, Peter Stano, has said this in Brussels on Monday in a comment to Interfax-Ukraine on the latest statement by Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov in Kyiv about the need to renew practical negotiations on the preparations for the signing of the agreement as soon as possible. Stano said that there was a meeting on this issue with Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Serhiy Arbuzov last month. **Interfax-Ukraine.** [Read More.](#)

[Brussels not considering sanctions against Ukrainian officials, says Ashton's spokesperson](#) Brussels is currently not considering the possibility of applying sanctions against Ukrainian officials, according to Maja Kocijancic, the spokesperson for EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Vice-President of the European Commission Catherine Ashton. "At the moment there are no new developments, and sanctions have not been considered. We continue to follow and assess the situation closely," she told Interfax-Ukraine in Brussels on Monday. She said restrictive measures are a sensitive instrument that should only be considered in specific situations and in accordance with EU guidelines. **Interfax - Ukraine.** [Read More.](#)

[Ukraine rules on personal data](#) The Ukraine has implemented new rules on the use of personal data this month. The new law's wide definition of personal data includes any information related to an individual who is identified or may be identified and says that the individual must give their consent for his or her information to be processed. **The Global Legal Post.** [Read More.](#)

[Foreign banks block money transfers by Ukraine banks demanding identification of senders](#) Foreign banks demand identification of Ukrainian senders transferring money abroad. Specifically, US banks want their partners in Ukraine to check if their clients are on the black list of those against whom economic sanctions have been imposed, Ekonomichna Pravda reports Jan. 13. Although no sanctions have been imposed on Ukraine officials the preparations for their imposition are under way, EP says. There is no doubt that the high level Ukraine officials incriminated in the bloody crackdown on Maidan protesters will be sanctioned. The interior minister, Yury Zakharchenko, is said to top the black list. Pres Yanukovich and his 'family' are also expected to be on the list. **ZIK.** [Read More.](#)

[Russia expels American journalist](#) US journalist David Satter, a longtime critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin, said Monday he had been banned from the country in one of the first such expulsions since the Cold War. Satter, a former Financial Times and Wall Street Journal correspondent who published three books on Russia and the former Soviet Union, had been living and working in the country since September 2013 as an adviser for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. The US government-funded broadcaster said that the US Embassy in Moscow has been informed of the move and lodged a formal diplomatic protest. Embassy officials have sought and not obtained an explanation from Russian authorities. **InterAksyon.** [Read More.](#)

[Donbas farmers complain of pressure over their support of EuroMaidan](#) The words say: Pay attention to kopanki [illegal coal mine], not farmers! There is a lot of evidence to suggest that the authorities at very least turn a blind eye to these illegal mines which are extremely dangerous. Farmers from Donetsk who have sent money and food for the Kyiv EuroMaidan have faced questioning from the tax police and accuse the authorities of pressure. A number of farmers held a picket outside the regional tax inspectorate last Wednesday in support of local farmers who came under the scrutiny of the tax inspectors after their donation. **Human Rights in Ukraine.** [Read More.](#)

[Ministry of Culture threatened to terminate the registration of the UGCC because of the priests' presence on Euromaidan](#) Patriarch Sviatoslav ( Shevchuk ) on 13 January published and commented on the letter from the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine on the possible termination of the activities of religious organizations based on their activity on Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti) where for two months peaceful protests are held. On Christmas Eve, January 6, Greek Catholic head received an official letter from the Ministry about " systematic disregard for the law by some priests on Independence Square, allegedly supported UGCC authorities." **Religious Information Service of Ukraine.** [Read More.](#)

[Greek Catholic Church's Priests Warned About Protests](#) Ukraine's Culture Ministry has warned the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church that it could face lawsuits if its priests continuing participating in pro-European Union protests. In a letter issued on January 13, the ministry called the religious activities of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic priests on Kyiv's Independence Square in support of antigovernment protesters since December "a violation of Ukrainian legislation regarding the freedom of conscience and religious meetings," which could lead to "the cancellation of the church's activities" and criminal charges. **Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.** [Read More.](#)

[Ukraine's court upholds law that may ban Klitschko from running for president](#) The court overruled Klitschko's motion against the Verkhovna Rada (the country's parliament) and its President Viktor Yanukovich. On October 24, the upper-house endorsed an amendment to the Ukrainian tax Code, stipulating that a permanent resident in a foreign country could not be considered a resident of Ukraine. The legislation was signed into law by President Yanukovich on November 8. The boxing champion may be directly hit by this law, since he has been known to have a permanent residency in Germany and paid taxes there. The UDAR party has called the new provision a provocation, while its leader claimed he would run for presidency in 2015, whatever the odds. **The Voice of Russia.** [Read More.](#)

[Maidan urges U.S. to impose sanctions against Ukrainian officials](#) The Maidan has called on the U.S. Senate to impose sanctions against Ukrainian officials, including Interior Minister Vitaliy Zakharchenko. "I'm asking you to vote, make a decision and instruct [Batkivschyna MP and former Ukrainian Foreign Minister] Borys Tarasiuk to submit such a statement to the Senate of the United States: impose sanctions against Interior Minister Zakharchenko and a gang that violates the law and the constitution," Batkivschyna faction leader Arseniy Yatseniuk said at a weekly people's assembly on Independence Square in Kyiv on Sunday. Yatseniuk recalled that on January 15, Washington would host a meeting of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the U.S. Senate, which will be attended by Tarasiuk. **Interfax-Ukraine.** [Read More.](#)

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