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Russia: Government vs. Rights Groups

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For the past four years, the Kremlin has sought to stigmatize criticism or alternative views of government policy as disloyal, foreign-sponsored, or even traitorous. It is part of a sweeping crackdown to silence critical voices that has included new legal [restrictions on the internet](#), on [freedom of expression](#), on the [rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender \(LGBT\) people](#), and on other [fundamental freedoms](#).

An enduring, central feature has been the 2012 law requiring independent groups to register as "foreign agents" if they receive any foreign funding and engage in broadly defined "political activity." In Russia, the term "foreign agent" can be interpreted by the public only as "spy" or "traitor." To date, Russia's Justice Ministry has designated 149 groups as "foreign agents," courts have levied staggering fines on many groups for failing to comply with the law, and 28 groups have shut down rather than wear the "foreign agent" label. Organizations targeted include groups that work on human rights, the environment, LGBT issues, and health issues, groups that do polling about social issues. A court forced the closure of AGORA Association, one of Russia's leading human rights organizations, in response to a Justice Ministry suit alleging that the group violated the "foreign agents" law and carried out work beyond its mandate. The ministry has removed its "foreign agent" tag from 21 groups, acknowledging that they had stopped accepting foreign funding. Accordingly, as of December 15, 2016, the official list of active "foreign agents" consisted of 100 groups. **The 'Foreign Agent' Law** Under the 2012 law, groups must register with the Justice Ministry as "foreign agents" if they receive even a minimal amount of funding from any foreign sources, governmental or private, and engage in "political activity." The definition of political activity under the law is so broad and vague that it effectively extends to all aspects of advocacy and human rights work. Initially, the law required all nongovernmental organizations that met these criteria to register with the ministry and to identify themselves as "foreign agents" in all their public materials, with legal consequences for failure to comply. Russia's human rights groups resolutely boycotted the law, calling it "unjust" and "slandorous." In 2013, Russia's then-federal ombudsman, Vladimir Lukin, challenged the law in Russia's Constitutional Court. In 2014, the court upheld the law, finding that there were no legal or constitutional grounds for contending that the term "foreign agent" had negative connotations from the Soviet era and that, therefore, its use was "not intended to persecute or discredit"

organizations. The court also found that the "foreign agent" designation was in line with the public interest and the interest of state sovereignty. Two years of mounting pressure by the authorities, court proceedings, and massive fines did not succeed in forcing groups to voluntarily register as foreign agents. In May 2014 Russia's parliament amended the "foreign agents" law to authorize the Justice Ministry to register groups as "foreign agents" without their consent. In May 2016, parliament adopted another set of amendments to the law, expanding the controversial definition of "political activity" to include, among other things, any attempt by an independent group to influence public policy, regardless of the group's mandate. To date, the registry of "foreign agents" includes the following organizations:

1. Association of NGOs in Defense of Voters' Rights "Golos" (Moscow) – June 5, 2014
2. Regional Public Association in Defense of Democratic Rights and Freedoms "Golos" (Moscow) – June 5, 2014
3. Center for Social Policy and Gender Studies (Saratov) – June 5, 2014 (*the organization was shut down – May 22, 2015*)
4. Women of Don (Rostov region) – June 5, 2014 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – February 29, 2016*)
5. Kostroma Center for Support of Public Initiatives (Kostroma) – June 5, 2014 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – June 19, 2015*)
6. Interregional Human Rights Association "Agora" (Kazan) – July 21, 2014
7. Regional public organization "Ecozaschita! – Womens' Council" (Kaliningrad) – July 21, 2014
8. Public Verdict Foundation (Moscow) – July 21, 2014
9. Human Rights Center "Memorial" (Moscow) – July 21, 2014
10. Lawyers for Constitutional Rights and Freedoms / JURIX (Moscow) – July 21, 2014 (*the organization was shut down – May 26, 2015*)
11. Soldiers' Mothers (Saint Petersburg) – August 28, 2014 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – October 23, 2015*)
12. Freedom of Information Foundation / Institute for Information Freedom Development – August 28, 2014
13. PIR Center – September 3, 2014 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – February 24, 2016*)
14. Association "Partnership for Development" (Saratov) – October 2, 2014 (*the organization was shut down – November 6, 2015*)
15. "News Agency MEMO.RU" (Moscow) – November 20, 2014
16. Regional Press Institute (St. Petersburg) – November 20, 2014
17. Moscow School of Civic Education – December 9, 2014
18. Rakurs, Arkhangelsk regional non-governmental LGBT organization – December 15, 2014
19. All-Russian movement "For Human Rights" – December 22, 2014 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – December 30, 2015*)
20. Human Rights Center (Kaliningrad) – December 25, 2014
21. Krasnodar Regional Social Organization of University Alumni – December 25, 2014 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – April 22, 2016*)
22. Regional social organization "Public Commission for Academic Sakharov's Heritage Preservation" – December 25, 2014
23. Resource Human Rights Center (St. Petersburg) – December 30, 2014 (*the organization was shut down – November 3, 2015*)
24. Regional Public Organization "Man and the Law" (Republic of Mari El) – December 30, 2014
25. Center for Social Development "Vozrozhdeniye" (Pskov) – December 30, 2014
26. Public Human Rights Organization "Civil Control" (St. Petersburg) – December 30, 2014
27. The League of Women Voters (St. Petersburg) – December 30, 2014 (*the organization was shut down – May 22, 2015*)

28. Free Press Support Foundation – December 30, 2014
29. Interregional Non-Governmental Organization "The Committee Against Torture" – January 16, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – September 13, 2016*)
30. Educational Center "Memorial" (Sverdlov region) – January 16, 2015
31. Autonomous non-profit human rights organization "Youth Center for Consulting and Training" – January 20, 2015 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – July 22, 2015*)
32. "Information Bureau of the Nordic Council of Ministers in St. Petersburg" – January 20, 2015
33. Jewish regional branch of the Russian public organization "Municipal Academy" – January 26, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – May 22, 2015*)
34. The noncommercial partnership "Press Development Institute - Siberia" – January 30, 2015
35. Center for social, psychological and legal help to victims of discrimination and homophobia "Maximum" (Murmansk) – February 4, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – October 28, 2015*)
36. Interregional public fund for civil society development "Golos-Povolzhye" (Samara) – February 6, 2015
37. Interregional charity organization "Siberian Environmental Center" (Novosibirsk) – February 12, 2015
38. Center for Civic Analysis and Independent Research / GRANI (Perm) – February 13, 2015 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – June 19, 2015*)
39. Municipal public organization "Samara Center for Gender Studies" (Samara) – February 16, 2015
40. Regional Fund "Center for Defense of Mass Media Rights" (Voronezh) – February 26, 2015
41. Regional Charitable Social Foundation "For nature" (Chelyabinsk) – March 6, 2015
42. Regional Ecological Social Movement "For nature" (Chelyabinsk) – March 6, 2015
43. Humanist Youth Movement (Murmansk) – March 13, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – August 25, 2015*)
44. Regional Social Organization for Contribution to Harmonization of Interethnic Relations "Azerbaijan" – March 13, 2015 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – July 22, 2016*)
45. Regional Social Environmental Organization "Bellona-Murmansk" – March 19, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – October 16, 2015*)
46. "Educational Center for Environment and Security" (Samara) – March 20, 2015 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – October 8, 2015*)
47. Foundation "Migration XXI Century" – March 27, 2015 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – November 25, 2016*)
48. Eco-logika (Rostov) – April 3, 2015 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – March 30, 2016*)
49. Transparency International Russia - April 7, 2015
50. Social Environmental Organization "Planeta Nadezhd" – April 15, 2015
51. Foundation for Consumers' Rights Defense (Novosibirsk) – April 17, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – May 12, 2016*)
52. Civil Assistance Committee – April 20, 2015
53. Foundation 19/29 - Foundation for Support of Investigative Journalism – April 24, 2015
54. Commemorative Centre of History of Political Repressions "Perm - 36" – April 29, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – August 18, 2016*)
55. Women's League (Kaliningrad) – April 29, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – December 16, 2015*)
56. Legal Expert Partnership "Soyuz " – May 7, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – 25 August 2015*)
57. Center for Development of Non-Commerical Organizations – May 13, 2015
58. Club of Accountants and Auditors of Non-Commercial Organizations – May 13, 2015 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – March 30, 2016*)

59. Informational Bureau of the Council of Ministers of Northern Countries (Kaliningrad) – May 13, 2015
60. Sut'yajnik (Yekaterinburg) – May 15, 2015
61. Human Rights Academy (Yekaterinburg) – May 15, 2015
62. Ecological Center "Dront" (Nizhny Novgorod) – May 22, 2015
63. The non-profit organization "Liberal Mission" Scientific Foundation of Theoretical and Applied Research – May 25, 2015 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – September 11, 2015*)
64. The non-profit Dynasty Foundation – May 25, 2015
65. Union of Employers (Tula region) – May 28, 2015 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – December 13, 2016*)
66. Youth organization "Nuori Karjala/Young Karelia" – June 19, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – March 25, 2016*)
67. Siberian Center for Support of Social Initiatives – June 19, 2015 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – September 21, 2016*)
68. Interregional Social Foundation for Peace in the South and in the Northern Caucasus – June 19, 2015
69. Informational Center "Free Inform" – June 22, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – June 21, 2016*)
70. Center for Independent Sociological Studies (St. Petersburg) – June 22, 2015
71. Regional Organization for Population and Development – June 23, 2015
72. Geblerov Ecological Society (Barnaul) – June 23, 2015
73. Association "Legal Basis" (Yekaterinburg) – July 3, 2015
74. Interregional Non-governmental Organization "Northern Environmental Coalition" (Petrozavodsk) – July 8, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – December 1, 2015*)
75. Komi Human Rights Commission "Memorial" (Syktyvkar) – July 21, 2015
76. Altai Regional Public Fund for 21st Century Altai (Barnaul) – July 22, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – March 28, 2016*)
77. Interregional Public Foundation for Civil Society Development "GOLOS-Ural" (Chelyabinsk region) – July 22, 2015
78. SREDA Foundation – July 28, 2015
79. Non-governmental environmental organization "Green World" (Nizhny Novgorod) – July 29, 2015 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – October 28, 2016*)
80. Civic Action Foundation (Perm) – August 5, 2015
81. Alliance of Funds of Local Communities of the Perm territory – August 11, 2015 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – October 26, 2016*)
82. Kabardino-Balkaria Human Rights Center – regional branch of the "For Human Rights" All-Russian movement (Nalchik) – August 18, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – November 6, 2015*)
83. The Human Rights Center of the Chechen Republic (Grozny) – August 21, 2015
84. Interregional Social Ecological Foundation "ISAR-Siberia" (Novosibirsk) – August 26, 2015
85. Perm Regional Human Rights Center (Perm) – September 3, 2015
86. Siberia's lifeline (Novosibirsk) – September 3, 2015
87. Golos Foundation in Support of Democracy – September 4, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – June 21, 2016*)
88. Jewish Cultural Center "Hesed-Teshuva" (Ryazan) – September 11, 2015 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – December 13, 2016*)
89. Sakhalin Environment Watch (Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk) – September 18, 2015
90. Yasavey Manzara Information and Research Center (Naryan-Mar) – September 23, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – June 15, 2016*)

91. Consumer Rights and Environment Protection Association "Princip" (Moscow region) – October 5, 2015
92. Far East Center for the Development of Civil Initiatives and Social Partnership (Vladivostok)– October 13, 2015
93. Russian Research Center for Human Rights – October 20, 2015
94. Women of the Don (Rostov region) – October 27, 2015
95. Friends of the Siberian Forests (Krasnoyarsk) – October 28, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – December 6, 2016*)
96. Photography Club "Sobytiye" (Omsk) – October 28, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – December 16, 2015*)
97. Research and Information Center "Memorial" (St. Petersburg) – November 6, 2015
98. Baikal Environmental Wave (Irkutsk) – November 10, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – August 1, 2016*)
99. Glasnost Defense Foundation – November 19, 2015
100. Human Rights Institute – November 20, 2015
101. Center for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North – November 27, 2015
102. Green World (Leningrad region) – December 2, 2015
103. Mashr (Republic of Ingushetia) – December 8, 2015
104. Woman's World (Kaliningrad) – December 11, 2015
105. Panorama Information and Research Center (Moscow) – December 18, 2015
106. Dauria Ecological Center (Chita) – December 30, 2015 (*the organization was shut down – September 1, 2016*)
107. Yekaterinburg Memorial Society (Yekaterinburg) – December 30, 2015
108. Bureau of Public Investigations (Nizhny Novgorod) – January 14, 2016
109. Committee for the Prevention of Torture (Orenburg) – January 14, 2016
110. Institute of Forecasting and Resolving of Political Conflicts (Nizhny Novgorod) – January 22, 2016
111. Ryazan Historical, Educational and Human Rights Center "Memorial" (Ryazan) – February 1, 2016
112. Society of Assistance to Social Protection of Citizens "Peterburgskaya EGIDA" (Saint Petersburg) – February 2, 2016 (*the organization was shut down – April 26, 2016*)
113. Center for Health and Social Support "SIBALT" (Omsk) – February 15, 2016
114. Chelyabinsk Regional Organ of Public Independent Action "Ural Human Rights Group" (Chelyabinsk) – February 15, 2016
115. Women of Eurasia (Chelyabinsk) – February 15, 2016
116. Ural Democratic Foundation (Chelyabinsk) – February 15, 2016
117. Legal and Social Support Charitable Foundation "Sphere" (Saint Petersburg) – March 1, 2016
118. Centre for Civic Education and Human Rights (Perm) – March 3, 2016
119. The International Development Fund for Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation "Batani" (Moscow) – March 11, 2016
120. Center for Social and Labor Rights (Moscow) – March 21, 2016
121. Arkhar (Gorno-Altaysk) – April 5, 2016 (*the organization was shut down – October 6, 2016*)
122. Publishing House "Valentin Manuylov" – April 15, 2016
123. Tengri School of Soul ecology (Altay) - May 17, 2016
124. Hanse Buero / Information Bureau of Schleswig-Holstein in Kaliningrad (Kaliningrad) - May 24, 2016
125. Krasnoyarsk Regional Public Organization «Agency of public initiatives» (Krasnoyarsk) - May 27, 2016 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – September 21, 2016*)
126. Saratov Regional Public Organization "Socium" (Engels) - May 30, 2016
127. Perm regional non-governmental organization "Perm Civil Chamber" (Perm) - June 9, 2016 (*"foreign agent" status was suspended – September 21, 2016*)

128. Regional non-governmental organization Integration center "Migration and Law" (Moscow) - June 16, 2016
129. Non-Profit Partnership "ESVERO" (Moscow) - June 22, 2016
130. Andrey Rylkov Foundation for Health and Social Justice (Moscow) - June 29, 2016
131. Altai regional sport and patriotic youth public organization "Arctica" (Biysk) - July 6, 2016
132. Autonomous non-governmental organization "Free Word" (Pskov) - July 13, 2016
133. The Institute of Economic Analysis (Moscow) - July 22, 2016
134. Penza regional youth civic organization for prevention of negative phenomena among youth "Panacea" (Kuznetsk) - August 15, 2016 (*the organization was shut down – December 8, 2016*)
135. Samara regional, civic organization "American alumni club" (Samara) - August 26, 2016
136. Autonomous non-for-profit organization "Publishing house 'Park Gagarina'" (Samara) - August 31, 2016
137. Levada Analytical Center (Moscow) - September 5, 2016
138. Environmental Watch on North Caucasus (Maikop) - September 13, 2016
139. Autonomous non-for-profit human rights organization "Draftee's school" (Chelyabinsk) - September 21, 2016
140. Foundation for support of civil freedoms "Legal mission" (Chelyabinsk) - September 21, 2016
141. International Historical, Educational, Human Rights And Charitable Society Memorial (Moscow) - October 4, 2016
142. Sverdlovsk regional non-profit foundation "Health Era" (Ekaterinburg) - October 11, 2016
143. Chapaevsk non-profit organization "Chapaevsk city medical personnel association" (Chapaevsk) - October 21, 2016
144. Regional charity foundation "Samarskaya gubernia" (Samara) - November 2, 2016
145. Non-profit partnership "Internet Community" (Samara) - December 13, 2016

And the four NGOs which registered voluntarily:

1. Non-commercial Partnership "Supporting Competition in the CIS Countries" – June 27, 2013
2. "The Union of Young Political Scientists", Karachay–Cherkess Republican Youth Social Organization – December 15, 2014
3. Regional Social Movement "Novgorod Women's Parliament" (Veliky Novgorod) – March 6, 2015
4. Center of Independent Researchers of the Altai Republic – June 10, 2015

Leader of at least 1 NGO faces criminal charges personally:

1. Women of Don (Rostov region) - criminal proceeding is in process. Chair Valentina Cherevatenko faces up to two years in prison for "malicious evasion of the duty to file the documents required for inclusion in the register of nonprofit organizations performing the functions of a foreign agent."

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