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RFE/RL – Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Moscow Court Declares RFE/RL Bankrupt For Refusal To Pay 'Foreign Agent' Fines

- By [RFE/RL's Russian Service](#)
- [Current Time](#)

A Moscow court [has declared](#) the bankruptcy of RFE/RL's operations in Russia following the company's refusal to pay multiple fines totaling more than 1 billion rubles (\$14 million) for [noncompliance](#) with the so-called "foreign agents" law.

The legislation, introduced in 2012, originally targeted NGOs and rights groups but has since been expanded to target media organizations, individual journalists, YouTube vloggers and basically anyone who receives funding from outside of Russia and, in the Kremlin's view, expresses a political opinion.

"The Kremlin has now bankrupted our Russian entity, blocked our websites, and designated journalists as foreign agents, but our audience inside Russia continues to grow," said RFE/RL President and CEO Jamie Fly on March 13.

"Russians realize they are not being told the truth by [President Vladimir] Putin's propaganda outlets, and they are seeking independent sources of information. This latest assault on our Russian entity will do nothing to change that fact."

RFE/RL says the law amounts to political censorship meant to prevent journalists from performing their professional duties and is challenging the authorities' moves in Russian courts and at the European Court of Human Rights. More than 30 RFE/RL employees have been listed as "foreign agents" by the Russian Justice Ministry in their personal capacity.

RFE/RL closed its Moscow bureau on March 6, 2022, days after the Federal Tax Service filed a claim with the Moscow Arbitration Court for the forced bankruptcy of RSE/RS LLC.

The Moscow Arbitration court on March 13 cited the "inability" of RSE/RS LLC, which represents RFE/RL's interests in Russia and whose accounts were frozen in May 2021, to pay its arrears.

After Russia launched its unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and introduced military censorship in March 2022, Russia's media regulator, Roskomnadzor, blocked RFE/RL's websites in the country.

The actions of the Russian authorities, RFE/RL's Fly said at the time, represented the culmination of a yearslong campaign to obstruct the work of the broadcaster's decades-old operations in Russia.

Despite the blocking of sites and other forms of pressure, RFE/RL's Russian operation continues its work in full, and traffic to RFE/RL websites from within Russia has increased to record numbers.

Both at the start of Russia's war against Ukraine and at key moments, video views from within Russia have surged, "demonstrating the immense appetite of Russian-language audiences to know the truth," RFE/RL said in a statement.

On January 12, RFE/RL opened a new office in the Latvian capital, Riga, aimed at producing "trusted news and objective reporting" as part of its efforts to counter Russian disinformation and censorship.

Earlier in January, RFE/RL opened a new office in Vilnius, Lithuania, to target audiences in Belarus with content in both Belarusian and Russian in a bid to counter state propaganda and censorship by the regime of authoritarian ruler Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

RFE/RL is an editorially independent media company funded by a grant from the U.S. Congress through the U.S. Agency for Global Media. It distributes information in 27 languages to 23 countries where media freedom is restricted or professional journalism is underdeveloped.

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Moscow: Court declared bankruptcy of RFE/RL following the company's refusal to pay multiple fines of more than one billion rubles for noncompliance with "foreign agents" law

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