

Stricter NGO Rules to Apply to Transparency International, Golos

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Head of Transparency International's Russia office Yelena Panfilova

About 1,000 organizations, including anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International, independent election monitor Golos and even the Russian Orthodox Church, could fall under proposed tighter regulations for foreign-funded NGOs that conduct "political" activity.

Under legislation submitted to the State Duma on Friday by the ruling United Russia party, such NGOs must register as "foreign agents" within 90 days of the rules coming into force or risk 300,000-ruble fines and four-year prison terms.

Of about 230,000 non-governmental organizations operating in the country, tens of thousands receive money from abroad, and about 1,000 of those are involved in "political" activity and will need to register under the new legislation, RIA-Novosti reported Monday, citing a Kremlin source.

The source said a court would decide whether a group's undertakings qualify as "political." He said Golos, Transparency International, and environmental groups would probably fall under the new rules.

Mikhail Fedotov, head of the Kremlin's human rights council, said the bill needed to be amended because it was too far-reaching.

"According to the literal interpretation of what is written in the bill, a foreign agent would be any organization that receives money from foreigners. But imagine how many Russian Orthodox Church believers live abroad — a whole diocese," he told Ekho Moskvyy radio.

The bill could be considered in the first reading as early as Friday.

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