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Copyright Group Brings Lawsuit

By The Moscow Times

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Electronics giants like Nokia and Panasonic might be sued for not paying royalties on their devices locally, since the Russian Union of Rights Holders filed a lawsuit against a number of recordable media importers, a report said Monday.

The union, which is headed by Oscar-winning director Nikita Mikhalkov, collects a 1 percent fee on all imported recordable media and electronic devices that can make recordings.

It says it didn't get part of those fees between 2010 and 2012 after some companies “created conditions for evading legally obligated payments,” the General Prosecutor's Office said in a statement late last week.

The statement didn't specify possible violators, but Vedomosti reported that last year the union complained to the General Prosecutor's Office about Nokia, Panasonic, Samsung, Philips and SangFei.

As a result of the claims, the latter three companies started paying royalties, but Nokia and

Panasonic are still boycotting the collection, Gala Records/EMI chief executive Alexander Blinov told Vedomosti.

Nokia and Panasonic owe the union about 800 million rubles ($25 million) and 60 million rubles, respectively, the report said, citing an unidentified copyright holder.

One of Nokia's rebuttals is that mobile phones are almost never used to record data.

The Russian Union of Rights Holders was founded in 2010 and was licensed by the state to collect fees from importers and manufacturers of recordable media, including mobile phones, on behalf of copyright holders.

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