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British Musician Cancels Russian Concerts in Protest of NGOs 'Crackdown'

By The Moscow Times

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A famous British musician has canceled his upcoming concerts in Moscow and St. Petersburg due to what he sees as a crackdown on human rights organizations.

"Given the crackdown by Russian authorities on groups including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, I have regretfully decided to cancel my upcoming concerts in Moscow and St. Petersburg in June," a statement on Mark Knopfler's website says.

Knopfler, most famous as one of the founding members of Dire Straits, was due to perform on June 7 and 8 in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The concerts were part of his world tour for his new album "Privateering."

Experts say this marks the first such "walkout" by a Western artist in protest of recent legislation and that other Western performers may follow Knopfler's example.

Since early February, over 90 organizations have received unannounced inspections by prosecutors in connection with the new law on NGOs, which requires any organization receiving foreign funding to register as a "foreign agent."

Transparency International, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have been among those visited, as well as elections watchdog Golos and the human rights group Memorial.

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