

Putin Slams Allegations of NGO Crackdown

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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On the eve to his visit to Germany and the Netherlands, President Vladimir Putin angrily denied that the Kremlin is waging a crackdown against NGOs and the country's civil society.

In an interview with German broadcaster ARD, Putin rebuffed a reporter for arguing that the ongoing raids in NGO offices are seen as an intimidation. "I believe that YOU are intimidating the German public. Nothing like that is happening and there is no need to intimidate people," he was quoted as saying, according to excerpts released by email Friday.

Putin defended the law that obligates national NGOs to register as foreign agents if they use foreign funds to finance political activity, by arguing that it does not ban or limit anything and forces no closures. "No activity, even in domestic politics with foreign funding, is forbidden. We just want to know, who gets this money and for what it is spent," he said.

Prosecutors, tax inspectors and other officials have searched offices and confiscated documents at more than a hundred NGOS over the past two weeks, prompting an international outcry. Among those organizations targeted were two leading German NGOs, including the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, which is run by Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democrat party, or CDU.

Putin is due to hold talks with Merkel this Sunday, when he both leaders will open the Hanover Industry Trade Fair. Merkel, who has been markedly more critical of Putin since his return to the presidency last year, has already said through her spokesman that she will raise the NGO issue.

On Monday, Putin is expected in Amsterdam for talks with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and to open the Netherlands-Russia Year 2013, which includes joint events on culture, the economy, and society.☒☒

Rights activists have announced protests during Putin's trip.

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