

# Golos Fined \$10K for Not Registering as Foreign Agent

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia's only independent election monitoring group was fined 300,000 rubles (\$10,000) on Thursday for failing to register as a foreign agent — the first enforcement by Russian authorities of a much-disputed law.

The parliament passed legislation in November obliging nongovernmental organizations that receive foreign funding and are involved in loosely defined political activities to register as foreign agents. Rights defenders and civil society activists see it as a tool intended to erode their credibility.

Golos' executive director Grigory Melkonyants said it would appeal the decision in a higher court.

Golos was fined for receiving \$65,470 in award money from the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, which supports people persecuted for their opinions. The organization claimed

that it transferred the money back as soon as it reached its account.

Melkonyants said Golos was amazed that the judge made the ruling after spending no more than 15 minutes deliberating.

"It seems that she knew in advance which decision she would come to no matter what evidence we showed in court," he said.

Golos' election observers, who worked at polling stations all over the country, presented overwhelming evidence suggesting widespread vote-rigging in the 2011 parliamentary election.

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