Moscow Court Upholds Fine Against Election Watchdog

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Golos' deputy director Grigory Melkonyants listening to a judge Friday. **Ivan Sekretarev**

A 300,000 ruble ($9,500) fine imposed last month on Russia's independent election monitoring agency Golos has been upheld by a Moscow court.

The Presnensky District Court rejected the organization's appeal against the fine that was imposed under the law requiring all nongovernmental organizations that receive foreign funding and engage in political activity to register as "foreign agents," Interfax reported Friday.

Golos director Lilia Shibanova was also fined 100,000 rubles (about $3,150) for refusing to register the agency with the Justice Ministry, and that fine was upheld. The election watchdog insists that it has not received foreign funds since the NGO law came into effect in November.

Grigory Melkonyats, deputy executive director of Golos, said the Norwegian Helsinki

Committee sent them 7,000 euros by mistake. The money was moved to the bank's transit account as soon as the error was noticed, a claim supported by the agency's lawyer, who presented documentation showing that the money was not in Golos' account.

Despite the fine, the association does not intend to stop their work and is ready to get to the Constitutional Court and the European Convention on Human Rights to prove their innocence, according to a Golos press release.

Golos was the first group to face administrative charges following the introduction of the law. It has been vocal in criticizing Russian elections in recent years, most notably during the December 2011 State Duma elections, which were followed by large-scale protests against electoral fraud, RIA Novosti reported.

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