

Deputies to Strengthen Bill on 'Foreign Agents' in Media

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russian lawmakers have withdrawn from the State Duma a bill that would force media outlets to register as "foreign agents," but only so that they can make it more stringent amid concerns caused by the violent public protests in Ukraine.

According to the bill, which was submitted to the Duma in its most recent form in November 2012, media outlets that receive more than half of their funding from abroad and cover "political events" must be classed as "foreign agents."

The bill was heavily criticized by journalists and the presidential human rights council, which called it "excessive, conceptually wrong and contradicting the Constitution."

It viewed by many as an extension of another piece of legislation introduced in June 2012 that applied the same term to foreign-funded nongovernmental organizations that engage in political activity.

State Duma deputy Yevgeny Fyodorov, who is one of the bill's authors, said Tuesday that media companies could easily "get around" the foreign-funding regulation and said that stricter definitions were needed, Itar-Tass reported.

He said that the events in Ukraine had convinced his colleagues of the need to strengthen the bill. He accused the media of "practically provoking a civil war" in Ukraine, and said that the "situation was essentially the same in Russia," without explaining in greater detail.

The amended bill is unlikely to be considered by the Duma until after the 2014 Winter Olympics and Paralympics, which take place in Sochi in February and March.

The protests in Ukraine have been ongoing since November, when the government backtracked on a trade deal with the European Union in favor of closer ties with Russia.

On Jan. 16 the Ukrainian parliament introduced legislation that placed restrictions on public protests and the activities of local journalists and bloggers.

It also introduced the term "foreign agent" for local NGOs.

The Ukrainian media has called the legislation repressive and said that it amounted to censorship.

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