

Rights Group Slams Putin Crackdown

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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NEW YORK — Civil rights and liberties around the world declined for the eighth straight year, dragged down by the Egyptian military's coup, Venezuela clinging to authoritarianism and President Vladimir Putin's crackdown on opposition groups, according to a pro-democracy watchdog group.

Freedom House, which has ranked national trends in civil rights and liberties since the 1970s, said it is worried by a new trend in totalitarianism, in the form of bogus democracies, in which the ruling party or class cripples the opposition, co-opts the media and hobbles civil society groups, without crushing or banning them.

Freedom House pointed to the Russian government's dominance of TV and the recent dissolution of independent news agency RIA Novosti, which has been merged with nationalist media outlet Russia Today.

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