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NGOs in Russia Could be Labeled 'Foreign Agents' Without Their Consent

By The Moscow Times

June 04, 2014



President Vladimir Putin signed a law allowing the Justice Ministry to register nongovernmental organizations as "foreign agents" without their consent, Interfax reported Wednesday.

A law that entered into force in 2012 required all NGOs engaged in "political activity" to formally register as "foreign agents."

The designation itself carries strong, negative associations with Cold War-era espionage. Furthermore, any NGO registering as a foreign agent is required to clearly label all materials as having been produced by foreign agents.

So far, only one NGO has registered as a foreign agent. Many others have refused to do so despite pressure from law enforcement agencies.

Up to this point, NGOs themselves were responsible for submitting their own applications

for the registry.

The new amendments vest the Justice Ministry with the authority register NGOs, and to impose fines against those deemed to be noncompliant.

The decision to include a given organization on the registry can then be appealed in court.

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