

Justice Ministry Adds 5 More Russian NGOs to 'Foreign Agent' List

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Russia's Justice Ministry has added five nongovernmental organizations to its list of "foreign agents" just days after President Vladimir Putin signed a law allowing organizations to be labeled as such without their consent.

An official statement on the ministry's website said the decision was made based on "court decisions confirming that the organizations are conducting political activities using foreign sources of funding."

Among the new additions are election monitoring organization Golos as well as the regional Golos organization, the Saratov-based Center for Social Policies and Gender Studies, the Kostroma Center for Support of Civil Initiatives and rights group Don Women.

"This will in no way affect our work," Golos deputy director Grigory Melkonyants Interfax reported Monday.

"Our association is in the process of liquidation. As for our regional group, that already hasn't

been working for a while. But it is another matter that we do not agree with the decision [to label us a foreign agent], and our lawyers are preparing a complaint, to set some sort of precedent. ..." Melkonyants said.

Last week, Putin signed into law a bill allowing the Justice Ministry to register organizations as "foreign agents" without their consent.

The original law entered into force in 2012 and required all NGOs engaged in "political activity" to formally register as "foreign agents" or face fines.

That law was widely met with criticism and concerns by activists, who warned that the label carries negative connotations and represents a government crackdown on civil society.

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