

Russia Adds Another Five NGOs to Foreign Agents List

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Russia's Justice Ministry added five Russian nongovernmental organizations to the registry of "foreign agents" operating in the country Monday.

In a statement published on its website, the Justice Ministry said that prominent human rights NGOs Agora, Public Verdict and Memorial had been classified "foreign agents" for having received foreign funding and engaged in what it deems to be political activity. Two other organizations — an environmental group from Kaliningrad and a legal association campaigning for constitutional rights and freedoms — were also added to the list.

In May and June, a Moscow court rejected the appeals of Memorial and Public Verdict against the label.

The Justice Ministry's statement said that organizations classed as "foreign agents" must provide biannual reports on their activities and quarterly reports on their use of funds, including foreign funding. The organizations must also indicate that they bear such a label when distributing and publishing materials.

In 2012, Russia passed legislation obliging all NGOs who receive foreign funding and who are involved in political activity to register with the Justice Ministry as "foreign agents." Only one NGO has reportedly done so voluntarily. Other organizations have been reluctant to adopt the politically charged label because of its espionage connotations.

Amendments to the legislation now allow the Justice Ministry to impose the label without the organizations' consent, although NGOs can contest the ministry's decision.

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