

Transparency International Required to Register as Foreign Agent, NGO Says

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Prosecutors have sent the Russian branch of international anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International a warning that is likely a precursor to registering it as a foreign agent, the NGO said in an online statement Friday.

Prosecutors said that the NGO's "actual activity includes interfering with the government's policy in the fight against corruption by lobbying its own proposals to change it," Transparency International said in the statement. "Basically, prosecutors are demanding that we submit an application to be included on the register of foreign agents."

A controversial Russian law passed in 2012 obliges nongovernmental organizations that engage in loosely defined "political activity" and that get funding from abroad to register as a "foreign agent" with the Justice Ministry. Critics say the term has negative, Cold War-era connotations, and is synonymous with "spy."

Transparency International, which has been operating in Russia for more than 15 years, was first warned to register as a foreign agent by Moscow prosecutors back in 2013. The

organization last year ranked Russia 136th on its Corruption Perceptions Index, a spot it shared with Iran and Nigeria.

Yelena Panfilova, who served as head of the Russian chapter until being elected deputy chair of the global organization late last year, called the prosecutors' warning "illiterate nonsense" on her Facebook page on Friday.

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