

Russian Parliament Passes Law on 'Undesirable' Foreign Organizations

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The bill will prohibit the work of foreign NGOs that are viewed as "a threat to the foundations of the constitutional system of the Russian Federation."

Russia's parliament passed in a third and final reading Tuesday a bill that will allow the government to declare foreign and international nongovernmental organizations operating in Russia as "undesirable."

The bill will prohibit the work of foreign NGOs that are viewed as "a threat to the foundations of the constitutional system of the Russian Federation, its defense capabilities and its national security," according to the bill's text, published on the website of the Duma, the lower chamber of parliament.

Russian human rights activists have slammed the bill as targeting the country's civil society and cutting it off from the international NGO community.

"The main target of this bill is Russian organizations. There is no need for a specific law to close one branch or another of an international organization: The Justice Ministry can do

that in a second," Tanya Lokshina, a senior researcher at the Moscow office of the international NGO Human Rights Watch, told the Interfax news agency.

"This bill cuts Russian activists off from the international community," Lokshina told The Moscow Times earlier.

Before the bill was passed in its third reading, the head of the Presidential Human Rights Council, Mikhail Fedotov, said he opposed it.

"We believe this bill is counterproductive," he told Interfax, adding that he believes it could be repealed if Russia's relationship with the United States improves.

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