

Russia's Dynasty Science Foundation Fined in Foreign Agent Dispute

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The Justice Ministry in Moscow.

A Moscow court on Wednesday fined Russia's largest private donor supporting science for refusing to register as a foreign agent.

Critics say the government is using the law — directed at foreign-funded organizations engaged in loosely defined political activities — to hound NGOs that are critical of the Kremlin.

A court in Moscow acting at the Justice Ministry's request has fined the Dynasty Foundation 300,000 rubles (\$5,600) after the foundation refused to register as a foreign agent, the ministry said. Dynasty, founded by mobile telecoms tycoon Dmitry Zimin, has been giving grants to science projects and scientists for over a decade.

About 1,500 people took part in a Moscow rally last weekend to protest what they say is insufficient funding for science and against pressure on the foundation.

Dynasty was set to allocate about \$8 million in grants this year. The foreign agent label will make it nearly impossible for Dynasty for support state-funded libraries, schools and colleges. Zimin has been quoted as saying he will close the foundation because it was placed on the list.

The foundation was classified as receiving foreign funding because Zimin, a Russian citizen and resident, keeps his fortune in foreign banks.

The 82-year-old former physicist has not publicly supported any opposition politicians nor has he publicly funded any. His son, however, recently launched a charity to support independent media in Russia which often cover stories critical of the Kremlin that state media won't cover.

The Justice Ministry, which put Dynasty on the foreign agent list, has pointed to seminars on liberal thinking that Dynasty funded as evidence of political activities.

Dynasty's advisory council convened last week to discuss the future of the foundation, which depends entirely on Zimin's donations, but decided to postpone the decision till later this summer.

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