

Moscow Center for Refugee Children on the Verge of Closing

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A center that helps children of refugees adjust to school and life in Moscow is on the verge of closing after authorities canceled its lease agreement and labeled its managing organization a “foreign agent.”

The Center for Adaptation and Training, a project of the NGO Civil Assistance Committee, currently has 73 students, including children from Afghanistan, Congo, Ukraine, Syria and Uzbekistan. In addition to helping the students with their Russian language skills, the center provides psychological support to help them settle into the Russian school system.

According to a press release from the Civil Assistance Committee, the Moscow city property office canceled the rental agreement with the center for the space it was renting at 33 Dolgorukovskaya Street in April, but gave the organization three months to find a new place. That agreement expired July 13.

“We haven't found new place yet. We don't know what's going to happen,” Ameta, the center administrator told the Moscow Times by phone on Wednesday.

The Civil Assistance Committee has faced difficulties after being declared a "foreign agent" by the Russian government, Interfax news agency reported in April. Under Russian law, NGOs that receive funding from abroad and engage in loosely defined "political activities" can be declared "foreign agents" and must refer to themselves as such.

The Adaptation Center was founded in 1996 after refugees from Chechnya fled to Moscow and found that their children were barred from schools because they had no local registration.

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