

Russian Media Executives Lambast Foreign Funding Bill as Repressive

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The bill would require media to report all funding they receive from abroad.

Russian media representatives slammed as repressive and damaging a recently introduced bill that would oblige media to declare foreign funding at a session in the State Duma on Thursday, the Interfax news agency reported.

The bill would require media to report all funding they receive from abroad — with the exception of advertising and funds from the company founder — to Roskomnadzor, the state media watchdog, or pay a fine for failing to do so. Multiple violations would allow a court to close down the offending media outlet.

Since the bill would make it possible for media outlets to be closed down, it could be used as a repressive instrument, the head of Vedomosti newspaper's legal department, Vladimir Rumyantsev, told a meeting of the Duma's information policy committee, Interfax reported.

When a media organization sells a subscription, it cannot check the buyer's citizenship, but if the buyer is foreign, the company will have unintentionally violated the bill, he added.

“This bill is fighting against phantoms that don't exist, and sets down aims that it won't achieve, while achieving other aims: It will eliminate independent media, leaving only state outlets,” Rumyantsev was cited by Interfax as saying.

Kommersant newspaper's CEO Maria Komarova said that the bill, which was introduced by an inter-party group of Duma deputies on Oct. 7, can be interpreted as repressive in its current version, Interfax reported.

Leonid Levin, head of the Duma's information policy committee, said at the meeting that the bill would be edited and revised during the parliamentary hearings it must undergo before it can become law, Vedomosti reported.

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