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Russian Human Rights NGO Agora Banned by Regional Court

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Russian human rights group Agora has been banned by Tatarstan regional Supreme Court, Agora head Pavel Chikov said Wednesday via his Twitter account.

“It's the first [NGO] banning by a court,” Chikov said. The main argument presented by the court in favor of the ban was that Agora was “shaping public opinion,” he said.

> Важно! Верховный суд Татарстана только что ликвидировал Ассоциацию Агора по иску Минюста. Впервые ликвидация по решению суда, очень гордимся
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> — Pavel Chikov (@pchikov) February 10, 2016

The court ruled in favor of the Ministry of Justice, which had asked it to approve the liquidation of Agora.

The ministry considered Agora a violator of the “foreign agents” law because it allegedly

attempted to influence public opinion and affect state policy, the NGO's lawyer Ramil Akhmedgaliev told the RBC news website.

Agora was included on the “foreign agents” list in July 2014. According to legislation passed in 2012, all NGOs that receive foreign funding and are involved in political activity are obliged to register with the Justice Ministry as "foreign agents."

Organizations have been reluctant to adopt the politically charged label because of its espionage connotations.

Agora is composed of 35 lawyers. They have been involved in some of the most politically sensitive cases in recent years, such as involving Pussy Riot and Ukrainian director Oleg Sentsov.

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