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Russia May Label Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation 'Foreign Agent'

By Anastasia Bazenkova

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Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny

The All-Russian Interethnic Union of Youth has filed a request with the Russian Justice Ministry that they add the Anti-Corruption Foundation NGO — headed by the oppositioner Alexei Navalny — to its list of "foreign agents."

The group also requested that the Prosecutor General's Office investigate Navalny for inciting ethnic and religious hatred, according to a statement published Sunday on the website of the All-Russian Interethnic Union of Youth, a public organization set up in 2013.

The requests are in connection with an article in the Washington Post newspaper published on March 7. The article reported on the results of a survey conducted by the Anti-Corruption Foundation among the residents of two Russian republics — Dagestan and Tatarstan. The poll investigated the attitude of the republics' citizens to President Vladimir Putin's military campaign in Syria.

According to the survey carried out among 1,200 respondents, Muslims in both Tatarstan and Dagestan are more likely to oppose Russia's military operation in Syria than Russian Orthodox believers. Twenty-four and 22 percent of Muslims in Tatarstan and Dagestan respectively spoke out against the campaign, compared to 18 percent of Orthodox Russians in Tatarstan.

“We are outraged — what right does Navalny have to speak on behalf of all Muslims, and there is absolutely no doubt that the data from this survey does not correspond to reality and is aimed at fulfilling another order of their Western sponsors against Russia,” the statement said.

The 'foreign agent' label, a term typically associated in Russia with foreign spies, is attached to all Russian NGOs that receive funding from abroad and are engaged in political activities.

The law allowing the Justice Ministry to impose the label was adopted by the President Vladimir Putin in 2012. Since then, many non-government organizations in Russia have become the targets of government inspections and pressure from the authorities. Some prominent NGOs — like science foundation Dynasty — have opted to shut down rather than accept the politically-charged status.

On Tuesday, a rally against Navalny organized by The All-Russian Interethnic Union of Youth, took place in front of the office of Anti-Corruption Foundation, the Russkaya Sluzhba Novostei radio station reported.

The rally was attended by 10-15 activists, holding banners with slogans: "Navalny is a scoundrel" and "Navalny, go back to your America,” the report said.

Contact the author at a.bazenkova@imedia.ru

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