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Rights Group Memorial Declared 'Foreign Agent' (For Criticizing Law About 'Foreign Agents')

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Human rights organization Memorial International has ironically been declared a “foreign agent” for criticizing Russia's use of the Soviet-era "foreign agent" label, the Meduza news site reported Tuesday.

Russia's Ministry of Justice prosecuted Memorial under the same legislation the group had previously criticized, ruling that its comments could be classed as “political activity,” the organization's Head of Education, Irina Shcherbakova, told Meduza.

A statement which the group had made on the murder of opposition politician Boris Nemtsov was also found to have a political motive, Shcherbakova said.

Writing on its Facebook page, the group said that it considered the ruling to be unlawful and that it would appeal the decision.

The Memorial Human Rights Center and the Memorial Information-Educational Center — organizations which come under the Memorial International umbrella — have both already been registered as foreign agents.

Under Russian law, any non-governmental organization which takes part in "political activity" and receives money from abroad must declare itself as a foreign agent.

More than 80 groups within Russia are currently classified under the label.

A number of organizations have chosen to close rather than associate themselves with the term.

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