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Independent Russian Radio Station Ekho Moskvy Facing Government Closure

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Alexey Yushenkov / Wikicommons

Independent Russian radio station Ekho Moskvy faces closure within five days if it doesn't comply with demands from Russian media watchdog Roskomnadzor.

The government agency requested documents from the media outlet proving its compliance with Russian ownership laws, station chief Alexei Venediktov said on Friday.

Laws restricting foreign ownership in the media came into force in Russia on Jan. 1, 2016. Foreign citizens – and Russians who hold dual citizenship – are not allowed to found media companies or hold more than 20 percent share.

In the case of Ekho Moskvy, a U.S. firm currently holds a 19.92 percent stake in the outlet.

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Venediktov claimed that Roskomnadzor was "reinterpreting" the law as part of their latest

demands.

“Previous interpretations of these laws suggest that foreign stakeholders can have up to a 20 percent share [in a media company],” Venediktov told the Rambler News Service. “This letter [from Roskomnadzor] suggests a new interpretation. It says that a foreign company cannot be a co-owner of a media outlet in the Russia. Our lawyers are now carefully study this issue."

Roskomnadzor spokesperson Vadim Ampelonsky told the TASS news agency that a number of other media outlets had also received similar notices. He denied that the agency was preparing to take action against the station.

"In the case of Ekho Moskvy, there’s no doubt that everything will be carried out on time,” he said.

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