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Charges Dropped Against Activist for 'Non-Compliance' With Foreign Agents Law

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Valentina Cherevatenko **Vadim Karastelev / YouTube**

Investigators have closed a case against a human rights activist suspected of “malicious non-compliance with the duties of a foreign agent.”

Valentina Cherevatenko, head of the Women of the Don NGO in Novocherkassk in southern Russia, was the first person to be prosecuted under the law.

Russia’s Justice Ministry included her Women of the Don organization on its registry of “foreign agents” in 2014. The label is used to brand NGOs that receive foreign funding and engage in activity deemed political.

Organizations included in the registry are forced to mark their materials as having been produced by a “foreign agent." Failure to comply is punishable by a fine of up to 300,000 rubles ($5,000) or a prison sentence of up to two years.

Lawyer Pavel Chikov of the AGORA human rights group told the Mediazona outlet on Monday that the case against Cherevatenko had been closed.

“We’re delighted that these absurd charges have been dropped,” Human Rights Watch’s Tanya Lokshina wrote in response to the news on Facebook. “This is an important victory for Russian civil society, which remains strong despite the government’s unprecedented crackdown.”

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