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Russian Lawmakers Draft Bill Targeting Foreign Media

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Lyubimov Andrei / MoskvaNews Agency

After the Kremlin-run news channel RT capitulated to a U.S. deadline to register as a foreign agent, Russian lawmakers have drafted a bill targeting foreign news outlets in retaliation.

RT's chief editor Margarita Simonyan and the U.S. Department of Justice said the broadcaster's American branch had met a Monday deadline to register as a foreign agent. Russian officials last week vowed a speedy response to what Moscow says is a crackdown on Russian media.

The State Duma on Tuesday drafted amendments to two existing laws that would label non-Russian news media "foreign agents."

The bill amends Russia's law on mass media and the law on "undesirable organizations," deputy Speaker Pyotr Tolstoy said.

Tolstoy said the amendment will be submitted after the Duma's four party leaders meet with

Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin.

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Russia's Justice Ministry will "logically" be tasked with labeling the outlets as "foreign agents," the State Duma deputy speaker said.

The law requires "foreign agent" organizations to publicly disclose their status, report their activities and be subjected to financial inspections in Russia.

The label would apply if the outlet is either registered abroad, receives foreign funding or gets paid by a Russian company that is itself financed from abroad, the State Duma announced on Twitter.

Tolstoy said that news organizations would be banned from working in Russia if they fail to abide by the new law, according to the opposition-leaning news channel Dozhd TV's report.

"The State Duma has decided to respond quickly to an unfriendly step against Russian journalists in the U.S.," the Duma's statement cited him as saying. "I think that in this case, we have to react as pointedly as possible."

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