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After Foreign Agent Law, Russia Moves in on International Newspapers

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Days after passing a law targeting international media, Russia's media watchdog has worked out practical steps to ban the distribution of foreign print media within less than a month.

President Vladimir Putin on Saturday signed a law allowing Russian prosecutors to label media which receive funding from abroad as "foreign agents."

Russia's Justice Ministry has already notified U.S. government-sponsored networks, including Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), that they could be required to register under the label.

Related article: Russia's Foreign Agent Law 'Distorts Reality,' Says U.S. Media Official

On Tuesday, the Kommersant business daily reported that media watchdog Roskomnadzor

has also finalized a procedure to halt the distribution of foreign print media in Russia.

Foreign newspapers suspected of violating Russia's anti-extremism law or "abusing media freedoms" could be targeted under the new provisions, according to the report.

Under the procedure, local Roskomnadzor offices will be responsible for flagging suspected violations, setting in motion a 16-day process of checks that can result in an order to cancel the newspaper's publication license, Kommersant reported citing the document.

Ivan Zasursky, a media analyst who is a member of the Kremlin's civil society and human rights council, told the daily that the new regulation creates a legal framework to ban newspapers from being distributed in Russia.

"This could apply to The New York Times, German and French newspapers," he was cited as saying.

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