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Draft Bill Could See 'Foreign Agent' Media in Russia Fined $85,000

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"Foreign agent" wall graffiti / Sergey Karpov / TASS

Less than a week after passing a law targeting foreign news media, Russian lawmakers want to impose fines of up to 5 million rubles ($85,500) on outlets that violate the new rules.

Legislation that allows Russian prosecutors to label international media as "foreign agents" came into force on Saturday. Several U.S. government-sponsored networks have been warned that they could be forced to register under the label, requiring them to regularly disclose their finances.

Related article: After Foreign Agent Law, Russia Moves in on International Newspapers

Russia's new laws came in response to the Kremlin-backed RT network's registration in the U.S. as a "foreign agent" earlier this month. The American intelligence community argues that RT, formerly known as Russia Today, played a key role in Russia's alleged interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Russia's latest draft law published Wednesday imposes a fine of up to 5 million rubles ($85,500) for legal entities found in "gross violation" of the new foreign agent law.

Officials could face a 200,000-ruble fine for the same transgression, while foreign citizens could be fined half that amount and placed behind bars for 15 days, according to the proposal.

The draft defines a "gross violation" of Russia's media law as an offense repeated more than twice in a given year.

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