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Russia Declares Diabetes Society a 'Foreign Agent' After Pro-Kremlin Activist's Complaint

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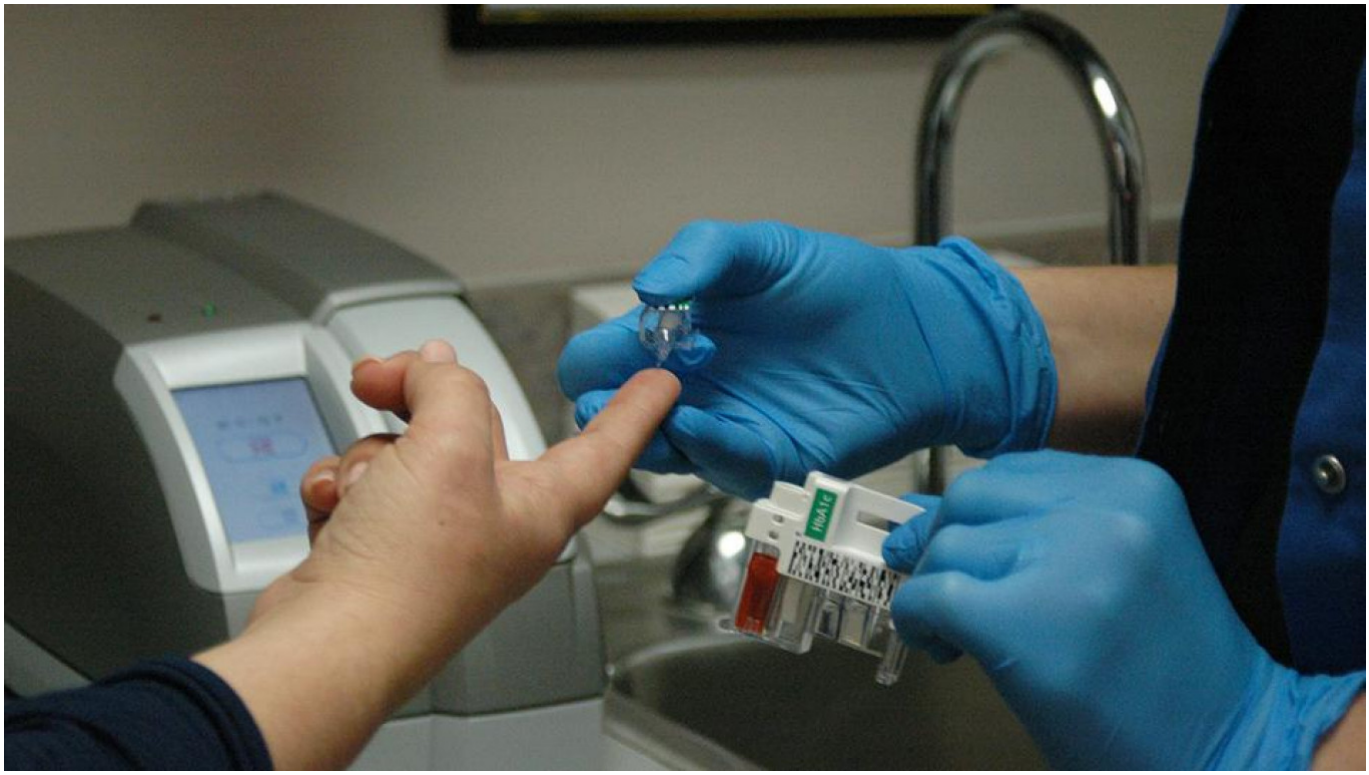

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An NGO helping diabetes patients in southern Russia has been labeled a "foreign agent," months after a pro-Kremlin activist lobbied for it to be blacklisted.

Prosecutors investigated the Saratov NGO for Disabled People With Diabetes after a complaint from a local student activist, who said he had "read on the internet that the organization exists with the funding of foreign companies." Russia's 2012 foreign agent law subjects labeled organizations to additional inspections and forces them to submit regular funding, expenses and objectives reports.

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On Monday, a local judge found the NGO guilty of violating the foreign agent law and fined it 300,000 rubles ($4,800), the Vzsar.ru news website reported.

The association, which helps 82,000 Saratov diabetes patients secure medicine and legal support, was added to the 'foreign agent' registry but can appeal the decision in a regional court.

“These actions are most likely aimed at ensuring that the organization self-destructs,” Larisa Saygina, the head of the association, told the Novaya Gazeta newspaper.

The pro-Kremlin student who had initially lobbied for the NGO to be blacklisted later pledged to withdraw his complaint, but law enforcement officials said that would not affect the investigation.

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