

# Russia Shuts Down Arctic Indigenous Rights Group

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Sergei Malgavko / TASS

Moscow's city court has ruled to [disband](#) an indigenous people's rights group almost 20 years after its founding, the latest in a series of NGO shutdowns that critics see as retaliation for their activities.

Russian authorities blacklisted the Center for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North/Russian Indigenous Training Center (CSIPN/RITC) as a "foreign agent" in 2015. Founded in 2001 to provide wide-ranging assistance to the peoples of the Russian North, Siberia and the Far East, the NGO renounced its foreign funding and was taken off the "foreign agent" list last year.

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The Moscow City Court on Wednesday [ruled](#) to liquidate the NGO, effectively ending its activities.

CSIPN/RITC's liquidation "is an irreversible process, like the death penalty," the group's lawyer Grigory Vaypan [told](#) the *Kommersant* business daily Thursday.

Russia's Justice Ministry had asked the court to shut down the indigenous rights group over "multiple" violations of the country's NGO law, according to *Kommersant*. Vaypan characterized the violations as "formalities" and said the group had begun fixing its paperwork before Wednesday's "strange" court ruling.

CSIPN/RITC's director Rodion Sulyandziga called the ruling "part of a trend to shut down organizations undesirable to the authorities." The court's decision comes less than a week after Russia's Supreme Court [ordered](#) to disband a veteran activist's 22-year-old civil rights group.

"The Arctic and its resources mean a lot to Russian business and its budget. That's why companies look at indigenous minorities as a barrier to their activities," *Kommersant* quoted Sulyandziga as saying.

"We've been protecting the rights of these peoples for a fairly long time. We have access to federal and international platforms where we openly talk about violations," he added.

"I think what's happening is a measure of vengeance for that."

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