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Snowden Granted Permanent Russian Residency – Lawyer

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Edward Snowden has been living in Russia since 2013 after he exposed mass surveillance by U.S. intelligence agencies. **Mutuel A. Lopes / EPA / TASS**

Russia has granted permanent residency to former U.S. spy agency contractor and whistleblower Edward Snowden after his current permit expired, his lawyer told state media Thursday.

Russia granted Snowden, 37, asylum in 2013 after the former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor exposed mass surveillance by U.S. intelligence agencies around the world. He faces up to 30 years in jail in the United States for violating the Espionage Act, though many civil rights activists see him as a hero.

Related article: Snowden Says He Doesn't Feel Safe Living in Russia

"Snowden was granted an open-ended residence permit earlier today," the state-run TASS news agency quoted his lawyer Anatoly Kucherena as saying.

The lawyer told Interfax that changes made to Russian immigration law in 2019 allowed Snowden to obtain indefinite residency.

Kucherena had said that Snowden's previous permit expired in April but was automatically extended until June due to the coronavirus pandemic, TASS reported. Snowden applied to extend his residence permit as soon as authorities lifted lockdown measures, the lawyer added.

Snowden, who has led a reclusive life in Russia, is not considering applying for Russian citizenship, Kucherena added. The whistleblower has previously expressed concerns for his safety in Russia.

Last year, Snowden said he wanted France and Germany to grant him asylum and expressed willingness to serve time in U.S. prison as long as he is guaranteed a fair trial.

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