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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Labels Navalny-Linked Doctors' Union a 'Foreign Agent' – Reports

March 03, 2021

Anastasia Vasilyeva, the head of the Doctors' Alliance union, is currently under house arrest for calling for rallies protesting Navalny's arrest. **Doctors' Alliance**

Russia has declared an independent doctors' union linked to opposition leader Alexei Navalny a "foreign agent," Interfax reported Wednesday.

The Doctors' Alliance headed by Navalny's ophthalmologist Anastasia Vasilyeva rose to prominence last year for criticizing the government's coronavirus response and distributing aid to underfunded regional doctors. Vasilyeva is currently under house arrest for calling on supporters to protest Navalny's arrest in January.

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Russia's Justice Ministry said the Doctors' Alliance "repeatedly received foreign funding and engaged in political activities," according to Interfax.

The union with its 42 regional branches is the 76th non-governmental organization to be added to Russia's "foreign agent" roster.

A number of NGOs have been forced to shut down since being slapped with the restrictive label under the 2012 foreign agent law, most recently the prominent group For Human Rights, which closed down this week.

Vasilyeva is among several Navalny allies charged with violating coronavirus-related restrictions by calling for mass nationwide protests in the wake of his arrest. Her dramatic arrest last month went viral on social media as she played Beethoven on her piano while police officers entered her home.

Embed:

> Family members and allies of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny were detained on charges of violating Covid-19 restrictions at last week's protests. Anastasia Vasilyeva, head of the independent Doctors' Alliance union, greeted the police with Beethovenhttps://t.co/wLtQrBOYvu pic.twitter.com/Be2cYrymEZ
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> — The Moscow Times (@MoscowTimes) January 28, 2021

Navalny, who accuses Russia's security services of poisoning him with the nerve agent Novichok, has since been sentenced to two and a half years in prison for violating parole while recovering abroad. The United States and the European Union sanctioned Russian officials and entities Tuesday in response to the Kremlin critic's poisoning and jailing.

The Doctors' Alliance said Wednesday that the Justice Ministry has not yet informed the organization of the decision to label it a "foreign agent." The designation requires the organization to report its activities and face crippling financial audits.

"There's no information on the Justice Ministry website. Don't regurgitate unverified news," spokesperson Alexandra Zakharova tweeted.

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