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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

U.S.-Funded Radio Calls on European Court to Halt Russia Fines

By AFP

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RFE/RL's appeal comes as independent media in Russia complain of worsening pressure. **Petr Kadlec / Wikicommons**

The U.S.-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty news website in Moscow said Friday it was urgently appealing to Europe's highest rights court to stop Russia from heavily fining the media outlet for hundreds of alleged infractions.

RFE/FL, which Moscow designated a "foreign agent" several years ago, said it was facing fines of up to $33 million by the end of the year for failing to attach that label to its stories, as required under Russian law.

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The American website's appeal to the European Court of Human Rights comes as independent media in Russia complain of worsening pressure, with journalists claiming space for voices critical of the Kremlin is shrinking.

RFE/FL said in a statement it had petitioned the court based in Strasbourg, France to grant interim measures barring Russia from "enforcing the 520 'administrative protocols' that it has brought or threatened against the media organization since January 2021."

It said that Russia's media regulator Roskomnadzor had already brought 390 administrative cases against the news organization, with another 130 expected Friday.

It added that the organization in Moscow and General Director Andrei Shary would be facing fines of around $2.4 million when the new complaints are brought Friday.

"RFE/RL LLC also warns that, left unchecked, the Kremlin's campaign will have a profound chilling effect on what is left of the independent media in the Russian Federation."

Russian police earlier this week raided the offices of a student news site based in Moscow and charged staff with inciting minors to protest as authorities piled fresh pressure on independent media.

Those raids came after security agents last week searched the home of prominent investigative journalist Roman Anin and questioned him over a 2016 investigation into the alleged wealth of Igor Sechin, the head of Russia's oil giant Rosneft.

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