

Moscow Bailiffs Visit RFE/RL Newsroom Over 'Foreign Agent' Fines

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RFE/RL has come under increasing pressure in Russia since being added to the country's "foreign agents" registry in February 2020. **Yury Kochetkov / EPA / TASS**

Moscow city bailiffs have visited the offices of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) to take inventory of the news outlet's equipment, the independent Meduza news website [reported](#) Friday.

The U.S. government-funded news outlet has come under increasing pressure in Russia since being added to the country's "foreign agents" registry in February 2020. By last month, Russia's communications watchdog had put forward up to 520 administrative fines totaling over \$1 million against RFE/RL and its head Andrei Shariy for failing to add the "foreign agent" label to its materials.

Related article: [U.S.-Funded RFE/RL to Move Staff Out of Russia Over Crippling 'Foreign Agent' Fines – BBC](#)

The bailiffs' service [handed](#) a legal notice to RFE/RL's Russian-language affiliate regarding the start of proceedings to collect 5 million rubles (\$67,000) in fines, Meduza reported, citing a source close to the outlet.

On Thursday, Moscow's Tverskoy District Court [suspended](#) 140 fines RFE/RL faces for violations of the controversial "foreign agent" law. The court upheld another 117 fines totaling 28.8 million rubles (\$390,000).

Groups or individuals identified as "foreign agents" in Russia must disclose their sources of funding and label all their publications with the designation or face fines.

Under recent expansions to the law, individuals and entities labeled "foreign agents" can face website closures and prison time. RFE/RL has reportedly [offered](#) its Russia-based staff the opportunity to relocate abroad in order to avoid jail sentences.

The outlet plans to appeal against the actions of the Russian authorities in the European Court of Human Rights.

The bailiff visit to RFE/RL's newsroom came on the same day that Russia added the VTimes news website to its "foreign agent" registry in what critics call a tightening of Kremlin pressure on independent media. Last month, Russia also labeled Meduza a "foreign agent."

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