

Russia Labels Broadcaster Dozhd, Investigative Site iStories 'Foreign Agents'

August 20, 2021



Several major cable providers dropped Dozhd in 2014, in a move some say was orchestrated by the Kremlin. **Stanislav Krasilnikov / TASS**

Russia added the independent Dozhd broadcaster and the investigative site Important Stories (iStories) to its registry of "foreign agents" on Friday.

The outlets are two of Russia's only remaining independent media and the latest in a slew of "foreign agent" labels levied at news outlets this year in what critics call an effort to silence non-state-controlled media ahead of key elections.

They appeared on the Justice Ministry's register of "media performing the functions of a foreign agent" on Friday evening.

"The Dozhd channel is not a foreign agent... it is a Russian media outlet," its editor-in-chief Tikhon Dziadko said on the messaging app Telegram.

The channel would appeal the decision "that contradicts the law and common sense," said Dziadko.

"Of course, we will continue to work as before," he said.

Related article: [How Do Russia's 'Undesirable Organizations' and 'Foreign Agents' Laws Work?](#)

Under a controversial 2012 law, any politically active individual or organization in Russia that receives funding from abroad in any amount can be labeled a "foreign agent."

Organizations branded "foreign agents" are subject to rigorous financial reporting and legally required to add the designation — which carries negative Soviet-era connotations — to everything they publish, including social media posts.

Amnesty International condemned the decision, accusing the Kremlin of "launching a campaign against independent media aimed at eradicating unbiased journalism and investigative reporting," and called for the "foreign agent" law to be scrapped.

iStories editor-in-chief Roman Anin has also been added to the registry along with several other editors and journalists from the outlet.

Russian investigators raided and questioned Anin this spring, an act he [said](#) was aimed at "putting pressure on us as journalists."

The independent VTimes, Meduza, The Insider and Open Media news websites have all been branded "foreign agents" in recent months.

VTimes, which was formed by journalists who left the Vedomosti business daily over a pro-Kremlin censorship scandal, was forced to shut down after its advertisers pulled out in the wake of the designation.

Another independent media outlet, Proekt, was labeled an "undesirable" organization, a move that legally forced it to disband.

Established in 2020, iStories' editorial staff is primarily based in Latvia with correspondents in Russia.

Several major cable providers [dropped](#) Dozhd in 2014, four years after it was established, in a move some say was orchestrated by the Kremlin as part of a wider media crackdown. Its Kremlin pool correspondent was [barred](#) from attending press briefings in June over its coverage of protests in support of jailed opposition politician Alexei Navalny.

AFP contributed reporting.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/08/20/russia-labels-broadcaster-dozhd-investigative-site-istories-foreign-agents-a74857>