

Kremlin Says Not Behind 'Foreign Agent' Labels Given to Independent Media

August 23, 2021



Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov **Sergei Bobylev / TASS**

The Kremlin was not behind Russia's labeling of two leading independent media outlets as "foreign agents," its spokesman Dmitry Peskov [said](#) Monday.

On Friday, the Justice Ministry added the Dozhd broadcaster and investigative site Important Stories (iStories), as well as six journalists from iStories, to its registry of "foreign agents." Kremlin critics say the designations are part of an ongoing crackdown aimed at silencing critical voices ahead of September's parliamentary elections.

Related article: [Russia Labels Broadcaster Dozhd, Investigative Site iStories 'Foreign Agents'](#)

Peskov said the decision to label Dozhd and iStories as "foreign agents" fell exclusively within the Justice Ministry's purview, distancing the move from the Kremlin and President Vladimir Putin.

“No, this was not coordinated with the Kremlin,” Peskov told the Ekho Moskvy radio station. “In this case, the Justice Ministry is carrying out its functions. Yes, the Kremlin knew about it, but the Justice Ministry is doing its job.”

He noted that the “foreign agents” law doesn’t technically force labeled outlets to shut down but simply imposes requirements such as financial reporting.

Dozhd and iStories join a growing list of independent news outlets that have been branded “foreign agents” in recent months, including VTtimes, Meduza, The Insider and Open Media.

While organizations labeled “foreign agents” aren’t explicitly ordered to close, media outlets say the label renders them toxic to advertisers, sources and partners, making it extremely difficult to operate.

VTtimes ultimately shut down after its advertisers pulled out over its “foreign agent” status.

In an interview with the Meduza news website, Dozhd founder and CEO Natalia Sindeeva [said](#) the designation was bound to happen sooner or later but vowed that the channel would continue its work.

“So, really, it’s strange that we held out for as long as we did. No matter — we won’t give up so easily,” she told Meduza.

Over the weekend, police detained at least nine journalists from independent outlets in central Moscow while they staged solo pickets against the crackdown on independent media.

The Russian Union of Journalists said Monday it plans to stage a demonstration on Sept. 4 to protest the use of the “foreign agent” law against independent media.

Original url:

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