

Russia Brands Bellingcat, Journalists ‘Foreign Agents’

The additions come hours after the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper’s editor Dmitry Muratov received the Nobel Peace Prize.

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Alexei Vasiliev / pexels

Russia added the investigative outlet Bellingcat and nine journalists from various news outlets to its “foreign agents” registry Friday.

The additions come hours after the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper’s editor Dmitry Muratov received the Nobel Peace Prize for “defending freedom of speech in Russia under increasingly challenging conditions.”

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Bellingcat, as well as the independent Caucasian Knot news website and journalists including BBC Russian correspondent Andrei Zakharov and Dozhd journalist Daniil Sotnikov, [appeared](#) on the Justice Ministry's lists of media outlets and individuals "performing the functions of a foreign agent."

Zakharov, a former journalist at the now-defunct Proekt investigative outlet, [broke](#) the story on President Vladimir Putin's alleged ex-mistress and their alleged extramarital daughter late last year.

Proekt was forced to shut down this summer after being labeled an "undesirable" organization.

"I expected this decision in the same way all independent journalists should expect it," Sotnikov told The Moscow Times. "I do not know the exact reason why I was included, but the Justice Ministry does not tell why us why we are included in the lists. I assume the consequences of this decision won't be very pleasant with all the extra reporting and the risk of a criminal case."

Bellingcat, which is registered in the Netherlands, has released in-depth investigations into the poisonings of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny and former double agent Sergei Skripal as well as Russian military intelligence activities in Europe. Moscow has repeatedly accused the outlet of being linked to Western intelligence, a claim its journalists deny.

Kremlin critics say the authorities are using the country's "foreign agents" law to wage a campaign against independent media this year, with nearly all of Russia's few remaining independent media outlets added to the registry in recent months.

News outlets and individual journalists added to the registry must follow rigorous financial reporting requirements and add a lengthy boilerplate text explaining their status to everything they publish, including social media posts.

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