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Russia Fines Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Novaya Gazeta Over 'Foreign Agent' Tags

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Novaya Gazeta newspaper editor-in-chief Dmitry Muratov. **Sergei Bobylev / TASS**

Russian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Dmitry Muratov and his newspaper Novaya Gazeta have been fined for failing to properly label "foreign agents" mentioned in their news coverage, Russian media reported Wednesday.

The fines are the latest step to enforce the country's controversial "foreign agents" law amid what critics call an expanding crackdown on independent voices this year.

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According to the Mediazona news website, Muratov and Novaya Gazeta were unaware of the Moscow court session fining them a total of 132,000 rubles ($1,800).

Moscow's Basmanny district court found Muratov and Novaya Gazeta guilty of failing to

mention the “foreign agent” status of two groups affiliated with jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, Novaya Gazeta’s legal team told the ChTD Telegram news channel.

Authorities struck one of those groups off its “foreign agents” registry this year after it self-liquidated in anticipation of another court ruling that outlawed it as “extremist.”

Russian law requires news outlets that mention “foreign agents” to add a disclaimer indicating that those entities are “foreign agents.”

The Nov. 11 court rulings came alongside similar charges filed against the RBC news website.

Mediazona reported that Moscow courts have received 259 administrative cases for violations of Russia’s increasingly restrictive “foreign agents” law so far in 2021.

Muratov, Novaya Gazeta's chief editor, received the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize alongside Philippine journalist Maria Ressa in October for their work promoting freedom of expression.

In a veiled threat following Muratov's win, President Vladimir Putin said “there’s no reason” to declare Novaya Gazeta a “foreign agent” if Muratov does not violate the law.

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