

Declaring Novaya Gazeta 'Foreign Agent' Would Be 'Stupid' – Muratov

By [AFP](#)

December 10, 2021



Nobel Peace Prize winner Dmitry Muratov. **Alexander Zemlianichenko / AP / TASS**

Giving the infamous "foreign agent" status to newspaper Novaya Gazeta, a rare independent outlet in a Russian media landscape largely under state control, would be "stupid," its editor-in-chief said Friday, hours before receiving his Nobel Peace Prize.

"I believe that during the 30-year lifetime that our newspaper has had, we have done so much positive and good for the country that announcing us as foreign agents would be detrimental to our country's power," Dmitry Muratov told AFP in an interview.

The 60-year-old Russian, who won the award jointly with Filipino journalist Maria Ressa for "their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression," said his newspaper had rescued people from prison in Chechnya, planted trees for its printing needs and covered people's treatments at its own expense.

"So calling our newspaper a 'foreign agent' would be a stupid thing to do," he said.

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The "foreign agent" label is meant to apply to people or groups that receive funding from abroad and are involved in any kind of "political activity."

It has, however, been used for many Kremlin-critical journalists and media, rendering their work exceedingly difficult.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has stated that winning a Nobel Prize is not a "shield" against the designation.

But at a press conference in Oslo on Thursday, Muratov said he did not believe he would be given the label even if he accepted the Nobel Prize money.

Notable for its investigations into corruption and human rights abuses in Chechnya, Novaya Gazeta has seen six of its contributors killed since the 1990s, including prominent journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who was murdered in 2006.

"We have always served our public, not our state. We are looking for approval from the public. We are more interested in their assessment of our work... than in the state's approval," Muratov explained.

Russia holds 150th place in a freedom of press ranking by Reporters Without Borders.

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