

Russian Court Suspends BBC Journalist's 'Foreign Agent' Status

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Andrei Zakharov / [facebook](#)

A Russian court has suspended prominent investigative journalist Andrei Zakharov's "foreign agent" status pending his dispute of the restrictive designation, his employer BBC Russia [reported](#) Tuesday.

Russia's Justice Ministry added Zakharov to its registry of "foreign agents" in October 2021 amid the year's sweeping crackdown on independent voices. In December, the BBC Russia journalist announced he had [left Russia](#) after facing "unprecedented surveillance."

St. Petersburg's Kolpinsky District Court suspended Zakharov's status until his lawsuit against the Justice Ministry to appeal his "foreign agent" designation is considered in court.

Related article: [BBC Russian Journalist Moves Abroad After 'Foreign Agent' Labeling](#)

Zakharov broke the story on President Vladimir Putin's alleged ex-mistress and their

purported extramarital daughter in late 2020. He also reported on Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections and most recently investigated the Russia-based hacking collective Evil Corp.

The suspension of his “foreign agent” status comes amid a growing chorus of proposals to amend Russia’s controversial “foreign agent” legislation.

Putin has ordered his Presidential Human Rights Council and the Justice Ministry to “review” the “foreign agent” laws by May 1.

Facing accusations of stifling dissent and punishing Kremlin critics, Putin has defended Russia’s “foreign agent” legislation as more liberal than its Western equivalents.

“Foreign agent” individuals and entities must submit regular financial reports and detailed lists of income and spending, as well as prominently display a wordy disclaimer on all articles, social media posts and other publications or face criminal charges.

They face criminal charges for refusing to comply with the legal requirements of the tag that carries Soviet-era connotations.

According to BBC Russia’s report that mentioned Zakharov’s suspended status, nearly half of the 75 journalists, activists, lawyers and artists to have been labeled “foreign agents” have left or are considering leaving Russia.

Only one “foreign agent” has returned to Russia because of work and social ties, the outlet reported.

“If you want a quiet life after being recognized as a ‘foreign agent,’ then emigration is the main and obvious solution,” said one of the self-described exiles.

Just two other journalists have had their “foreign agent” statuses suspended before Zakharov: Pskov-based Radio Svoboda correspondent Lyudmila Savitskaya, and 7x7 news website journalist Sergei Markelov.

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