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Putin Signs Expanded ‘Foreign Agents’ Law

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President Vladimir Putin signed into law Thursday legislation expanding the “foreign agent” label to encompass anyone deemed to have fallen under “foreign influence.”

Russia's registry of “foreign agents,” a name with Soviet-era connotations, lists “politically active” people and organizations that Russian authorities determine to have received foreign funding and subjects them to strict auditing requirements.

The new law signed by Putin expands the definition of “foreign agents” to those who receive support of any kind, not just money, from abroad.

Anyone who has worked with a “foreign agent” or received funding from one will be included in a new Justice Ministry list of people and groups “affiliated with foreign agents.”

Under the law, Russia’s state communications watchdog Roskomnadzor now has the authority to block “foreign agent” websites at the Justice Ministry’s request without a court

order.

“Foreign agents” are also now barred from receiving state funding, teaching at state universities or working with children.

The law comes into force on Dec. 1, 2022.

Putin signed the legislation four and a half months after he ordered Russia's army to invade Ukraine — a move that plunged relations with the West to their lowest point in decades and was accompanied by a historic crackdown on dissent within Russia.

Putin also signed off on a bill introducing prison terms of up to seven years for calls to act against national security.

AFP contributed reporting.

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