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Former Russian Official Demands to Be Deemed a 'Foreign Agent'

November 28, 2022



Rostislav Murzagulov. **vk.com/rostislavrm**

A onetime close ally of the republic of Bashkortostan's pro-Kremlin leader filed a lawsuit with the Russian Supreme Court on Monday demanding the Justice Ministry classify him as a so-called "foreign agent."

Rostislav Murzagulov — who now lives in Lithuania, where he hosts a YouTube show on a channel belonging to exiled Russian tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky — released a copy of the court documents he submitted in the case on Monday.

Under Russian law, anyone deemed to be a foreign agent is required to state as much in a lengthy disclaimer before publishing any of their work. They are also subject to onerous financial audits and are banned from working for the state, as teachers, or from organizing public events.

The Russian authorities use foreign agent status, which has been assigned to more than 200 individuals since its creation in 2012, to hinder the activities of opposition politicians,

activists, and independent journalists.

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"I insist on my right to be included in the official list of foreign agents and enemies of the state, because I consider this list to be a list of decent and brave people," Murzagulov wrote in his appeal.

The erstwhile official admitted he was himself guilty for "building this regime that went mad," telling Russian independent television channel Dozhd that he was ready to be punished for that, though he stressed that "putting an end to the war" had to be first priority.

For years Murzagulov worked closely with the head of the Russian republic of Bashkortostan, Radiy Khabirov, earning criticism from Alexei Navalny's former chief of staff, who accused Murzagulov of unleashing a campaign of persecution against opposition supporters in Bashkortostan.

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