The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Court Deems Human Rights NGO Vesna 'Extremist Organization'

December 06, 2022



vesna.democrat

A St. Petersburg court on Tuesday recognized the Russian human rights NGO Vesna as an extremist organization, the group announced in a statement, a move that if upheld will compel the organization to disband and cease all activity in Russia.

“We plan to appeal this decision and to continue working ... It’s not a secret that we have always advocated peaceful protest to bring about democratic reform,” Vesna said via its Telegram channel, describing the court's ruling as absurd.

Vesna is a youth movement with a long track record of campaigning for human rights in Russia, and its work has involved the organization of peaceful protests and actions as well as election monitoring. The group has long been critical of the Kremlin and took a strong anti-war position following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February.

The NGO is the latest organization deemed "extremist" in Russia and joins Alexei Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, Jehovah's witnesses and Facebook parent company Meta on the

list.

Related article: Moscow Shutting Down Amnesty, Human Rights Watch in Russia

Anyone found to be cooperating with an “extremist” organization faces legal consequences in Russia, while the organizations themselves are banned from operating in the country in any context whatsoever.

The prosecutor’s office claimed that Vesna's actions were aimed at ”undermining public security and constitutional order.” The court hearing was closed to both journalists and members of the public, though Perviy Otdel, another Russian human rights group, said in a statement that the judge had ignored the arguments made by Vesna's defense.

Vesna's fate appeared to be sealed earlier this year when the organization's Moscow office was raided by the police ahead of Russia's annual May 9 World War II victory celebrations.

The following day, the state internet watchdog Roskomnadzor blocked Vesna's website in Russia. On Oct. 16, Russia's Ministry of Justice put Vesna on a list of so-called “foreign agents," which presents enormous operational challenges to any organization.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/12/06/russian-court-deems-human-rights-ngo-vesna-extremist-organization-a79617