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Russia Names Lawyer Chikov, Journalist Varlamov 'Foreign Agents'

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Russian journalist and blogger Ilya Varlamov. **varlamov / Instagram**

Russian authorities on Thursday added prominent human rights lawyer Pavel Chikov and journalist Ilya Varlamov to the country's controversial "foreign agents" registry.

Chikov and Varlamov were designated foreign agents for allegedly spreading "inaccurate information about the decisions made by public authorities," the Justice Ministry said.

Chikov, whose Telegram channel has more than 500,000 subscribers, was among the Russian human rights defenders who helped draft-eligible Russian men defend their rights during last year's "partial" mobilization for the war in Ukraine.

Varlamov, who runs a YouTube channel with over 4 million subscribers, has openly condemned the Kremlin's aggression against Ukraine.

Russian journalist Bogdan Bakaleyko, opposition figure Svetlana Lada-Rus and political scientist Ruslan Aisin were also added to the list on Thursday.

The ministry's registry now includes more than 560 entities and individuals.

Rights advocates denounce the country's "foreign agents" law, which has gradually been expanded since it was first passed in 2012, saying it seeks to silence dissenters by branding them with a label that carries dark connotations from the Soviet era.

Labeled 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 else face criminal charges.

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