

Kremlin Cancels Earth Hour Over the WWF's Foreign Agent Status

By [AFP](#)

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Red Square in central Moscow goes dark for Earth Hour **Sophia Sandurskaya / Moskva News Agency**

The Kremlin on Friday said that Russia would skip this year's annual Earth Hour event on Saturday after the country's authorities designated the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) a "foreign agent."

The move comes as Russia continues to crack down on foreign-linked groups, including environmental organizations, following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Earth Hour, which WWF organizes, encourages people around the world to turn their lights off for 60 minutes as a way to raise awareness of environmental issues.

For the past 14 years, Russia has taken part in the event, which is scheduled for this Saturday.

"This year, we took the decision to hold back from this event," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters Friday.

"It is because they have become a foreign agent," he explained.

While the global environmental advocacy group has worked in Russia since 1994, Russia's Justice Ministry deemed the WWF's Russia branch as a "foreign agent" earlier this month.

Related article: [Russian Environmentalists Call On Putin to Revoke WWF's 'Foreign Agent' Status](#)

Before the Kremlin's announcement, WWF in Russia said that Earth Hour would only take place online this year due to its new status.

The organization said it would challenge the Russian authorities' decision to label it a foreign agent in the courts.

But it also urged caution, asking its supporters not to use the WWF symbol "as we are worried about our partners and colleagues."

Over 60 environmental groups signed a petition addressed to President Vladimir Putin this month calling on him to reverse the WWF's foreign agent designation, arguing that the organization is "apolitical" and has "successfully" pursued its mission to protect the environment in Russia since the 1990s.

"We are convinced that this decision will have a negative impact on the preservation of the unique nature of our country and believe it should be reversed," the signatories added.

Once a climate change skeptic, Putin has in recent years called on Russia to adapt to the global climate crisis.

Climate change has already had a significant impact on Russia, with permafrost in its northern regions melting due to rising temperatures, and wildfires in Siberia consuming more and more of the country's vast forest wilderness each year.

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