

Russia Launches 'Foreign Agent' Probe Into Yeltsin Center

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The Yeltsin Center in Yekaterinburg. **Vladislav Falshivomonetchik (CC BY-SA 3.0)**

Russia has launched a preliminary investigation into whether to designate former President Boris Yeltsin's history museum and cultural center as a "foreign agent," a senior Justice Ministry official [said](#) Thursday.

Deputy justice minister Oleg Sviridenko announced the probe into the Yeltsin Center during a session with federal lawmakers on Thursday, according to the state-run news agency TASS.

"I don't remember which of the deputies sent us such a request, but we are conducting an investigation," Sciridenko told the lower-house State Duma's commission that investigates foreign interference.

Founded by the Boris Yeltsin Presidential Center nonprofit in Russia's fourth-largest city of Yekaterinburg in 2015, the Yeltsin Center is billed as the country's only museum celebrating democracy and the freedoms of the 1990s.

The Yeltsin Center [told](#) state-run news agency RIA Novosti that it does not believe there is any reason for it to be labeled a “foreign agent.”

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Just a day after Moscow launched its invasion of Ukraine, the Yeltsin Center publicly called for an “[immediate stop](#)” to military hostilities.

However, less than two months later law enforcement officials [forced](#) the center to take down its anti-war statement.

The pro-Kremlin filmmaker Nikita Mikhalkov, who is a vocal war supporter, had previously called for designating the Yeltsin Center a “foreign agent.”

Russia has designated more than 550 people and organizations “foreign agents” since laws used to crack down on the opposition and independent media were introduced more than a decade ago.

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