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Russia Labels Rights Group Agora ‘Undesirable’

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Rights lawyer Pavel Chikov, the head of Agora. **Ivan Abaturov (CC BY-SA 4.0)**

Russian authorities have labeled the prominent legal and human rights group Agora an “undesirable organization,” state media reported Monday amid an ongoing clampdown on independent activists and rights defenders since the invasion of Ukraine last year.

Agora is an association of lawyers that has provided legal advocacy to journalists, opposition activists and other victims of suspected rights abuses since its founding in 2005.

The “undesirable” designation renders all of Agora’s activities illegal and forces its immediate closure.

Any affiliation with “undesirable” groups, ranging from working for them to making a donation and sharing their publications online, is a criminal offense.

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According to the state-run RIA Novosti news agency, the Prosecutor General's Office recognized Agora as a "threat to Russia's constitutional order and security."

Agora "focuses on covering and distributing facts of alleged violations of the rights and freedoms of Russian citizens, providing legal assistance to opposition members with an anti-Russian stance, including supporters of extremist organizations," RIA Novosti said.

The Kazan-based group is the 89th organization to have been labeled "undesirable" since Russia introduced the designation — which it has also slapped on Greenpeace Russia, Bard College and Transparency International — in 2015.

Agora was branded a "foreign agent" in 2014 on claims that it received foreign funding and was politically active.

Its founder Pavel Chikov, who was branded a "foreign agent" in March 2023, relocated from Russia to Europe after the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

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