

Russian Soldiers' Mothers Group Announces Closure After 'Foreign Agent' Designation

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Head of the Council of Wives and Mothers Olga Tsukanova. **Olga Tsukanova / VK**

An independent group of soldiers' relatives lobbying the Kremlin for the return of mobilized troops from Ukraine has [announced](#) that it will close after being slapped with a “foreign agent” label just months earlier.

“We cannot act with this stigma,” Olga Tsukanova, who heads the Council of Wives and Mothers, said Friday in a video address posted on YouTube.

“We’ve made the decision not to work further,” she added.

The Council of Wives and Mothers, which appeared after President Vladimir Putin declared a “partial” mobilization in September 2022, claims to represent draftees' relatives from 89 Russian cities.

It was involved in several high-profile scandals, which included [accusing](#) both Putin and

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu of “cowardice” for avoiding them at different events last fall.

Related article: [Explainer: Why Did the Kremlin Organize a Staged Meeting with Soldiers’ Mothers for Putin?](#)

Independent media outlets [link](#) the group’s origins to a fringe political movement that seeks a return to Soviet rule and has protested Covid-19 restrictions during the pandemic.

In May, Russia’s Justice Ministry [labeled](#) the Council of Wives and Mothers a “foreign agent,” claiming the group formed a “negative opinion” of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and distributed other foreign agents’ materials.

Russia’s popular social network VKontakte [banned](#) the group in November after it accused the Kremlin of excluding its members from Putin’s carefully staged meeting with the mothers of soldiers.

In Friday’s announcement, Tsukanova said she would “continue to act and stand up for justice.”

Tsukanova was [detained](#) by Russian authorities late last year and [accused](#) of “discrediting” the country’s armed forces. In March, she was [fined](#) after being found guilty of “abusing media freedoms.”

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