

Criminal Cases Against 'Foreign Agents' Doubled in 2023 – Vyorstka

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Pyotr Kovalev / TASS

The number of criminal cases against "foreign agents" in Russia more than doubled last year compared to the preceding two years, the investigative news outlet Vyorstka [reported](#) Wednesday.

Hundreds of journalists, activists and civil society figures have been branded "foreign agents" in recent years amid the Kremlin's widening crackdown on independent media and the opposition.

President Vladimir Putin has defended Russia's "foreign agent" law as "more liberal" than similar legislation in the United States.

But according to Vyorstka's tally, 86 out of the 406 designated "foreign agents" are currently under criminal investigation, compared with 38 out of 209 in 2022.

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Among those facing criminal prosecution, 76 are wanted by the police, 10 have been arrested in absentia, while only four so far have received sentences.

The "foreign agent" designation carries Soviet-era spying connotations and is designed to cut off groups and individuals from their funding and support inside Russia.

Individuals branded as "foreign agents" are required to submit financial reports to the Justice Ministry and label all their communications and public statements with a lengthy disclaimer.

Russia's Justice Ministry typically updates its list of foreign agents every Friday.

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