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St. Petersburg Opposition Deputy Vishnevsky Vows to Fight 'Foreign Agent' Label

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Boris Vishnevsky. **Boris Vishnevsky / Facebook**

Prominent St. Petersburg opposition politician Boris Vishnevsky said Wednesday that he plans to challenge his recent designation as a "foreign agent" in court.

Vishnevsky, a member of the liberal Yabloko party, is among the few high-profile opposition voices to have stayed in Russia following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Russia's Justice Ministry labeled him a "foreign agent" late last week on the grounds that he opposes the invasion of Ukraine and regularly contributes commentary and written pieces for foreign media.

"I view the Justice Ministry's decision not only as a personal insult, but also an insult to my voters, and I'll prove its complete unlawfulness in court," Vishnevsky, who serves in the St. Petersburg legislative assembly, said on his Telegram channel.

“I’m a Russian deputy and a Russian politician, I represent solely the interests of my constituents, the citizens of Russia,” he added. “I’m not under any external influence, I’m influenced only by the Russian Constitution.”

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Vishnevsky was charged with “discrediting” the Russian military in late 2022, but a judge sent his case back to the Interior Ministry over unspecified procedural violations.

Earlier Wednesday, St. Petersburg’s legislative assembly voted to strip the Yabloko deputy of two committee seats.

Assembly speaker Alexander Belsky introduced Vishnevsky as a “foreign agent” during the session's opening roll call, while local media circulated photographs of a “foreign agent” label on his nameplate.

Vishnevsky decried Russia’s foreign agents legislation as having “nothing to do with foreign funding or working for foreign organizations and states.”

“Now it’s just a reaction to a public political position,” he wrote.

Russia's “foreign agents” law has been gradually expanded since it was first passed in 2012, a move that officials said was a response to similar legislation in the United States.

Individuals and entities named “foreign agents” are subject to rigorous self-disclosure and auditing requirements.

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