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Russia Bans U.S.-Funded Rights Group Freedom House

By AFP

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Actor Richard Gere and Joe Biden at the Freedom House 2018 Annual Awards Dinner. **Gints Ivuskans / AFP**

Moscow on Tuesday designated the U.S.-funded rights group Freedom House as an "undesirable organization," effectively banning anyone from working for or having links with the group.

Russia's Prosecutor General said in a statement that Freedom House had called for "comprehensive assistance for Ukraine to defeat Russia" and had "discredited" the Russian army.

"The organization provides information, financial, legal, and other support to Russian opposition structures, pro-Western and LGBT activists, communities defending their interests, and persons convicted of terrorist crimes," it added.

Freedom House says it supports and provides funding to local democracy activists and civil liberty groups in more than 30 countries, receiving much of its financing from the U.S. State Department. It is best known for its "Freedom in the World" index, which monitors countries' civil liberties.

Authorities in Russia have declared scores of media outlets, think tanks, and non-profit organizations "undesirable" since 2015. Among the organizations labeled as "undesirable" are the World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace, Transparency International, and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

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