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Russia Labels Media Outlets as 'Terrorist Organizations' for First Time Ever

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Carrying a flag of the republic of Komi during celebrations marking the Russia Day holiday, June 2019.
Sergei Parshukov/TASS

Russia has named regional media outlets Komi Daily and Asians of Russia as terrorist organizations, marking the first time such a designation has been applied to a publication.

The Federal Security Service (FSB) added Komi Daily and Asians of Russia to its list of terrorist organizations citing their alleged ties to the Free Nations of Post-Russia Forum, a group advocating the dissolution of the Russian Federation. While the FSB claims the two outlets are among 172 structural units allegedly affiliated with the forum, they have both denied any connection.

The Supreme Court's landmark decision, finalized in late December, is the latest intensification in the Kremlin's ongoing efforts to suppress dissent, particularly from independent media critical of the government.

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The Free Nations of Post-Russia Forum promotes the decentralization and decolonization of Russia, aiming to dismantle the federation into 41 autonomous states.

The group, founded by Ukrainian entrepreneur Oleg Magaletsky and chaired by exiled Bashkir activist Ruslan Gabbasov, was previously designated "undesirable" and later "terrorist" by Russian authorities.

Prosecutors claim the forum supports terrorism and sabotage while advocating for the independence of Russia's republics as part of its agenda.

Asians of Russia is an independent media outlet covering the Asian peoples of Russia.

Komi Daily, which focuses on the culture and life of the republic of Komi, is known for criticizing Russia's invasion of Ukraine and has faced mounting state pressure. Its website was blocked for publishing controversial materials, and its editor was fined under incitement laws.

Currently operating from abroad, the outlet continues to report on the republic of Komi without censorship. It has, however, flatly denied any links to the Free Nations of Post-Russia Forum.

This move by the FSB is the latest in the widespread crackdown against independent journalism in Russia. As state control tightens, many journalists have fled abroad, including those advocating for independence for parts of Russia.

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