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Russia Declares Amnesty International 'Undesirable'

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Celeste Damiani / Flickr

Russian authorities on Monday designated Amnesty International as an "undesirable" organization, a move that risks significant jail time for those affiliated with the human rights group.

"The London headquarters of AIL [Amnesty International Limited] serves as a training center of international Russophobic projects, financed by the supporters of the Kyiv regime," the Russian Prosecutor General's Office said.

Authorities shut down Amnesty International's local office in April 2022, a few weeks after President Vladimir Putin ordered the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The "undesirable" label effectively bans the human rights organization from operating inside Russia and exposes its employees and affiliates to potential criminal prosecution.

Russia has used the "undesirable" designation to target independent media, opposition

groups and foreign organizations since introducing the law in 2015.

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In its statement on Monday, the Prosecutor General's Office accused Amnesty International of advocating for "increased military confrontation" in Ukraine.

"Since the start of the special military operation, activists [from Amnesty International] justify the crimes of Ukrainian neo-Nazis, issue calls to increase their financing and insist on politically and economically isolating our country," authorities said.

In a statement sent to The Moscow Times later on Monday, Amnesty International said it would "not give in to threats" and planned to continue its work to ensure "people in Russia are able to enjoy their human rights without discrimination."

"The authorities are deeply mistaken if they believe that by labelling our organization 'undesirable' we will stop our work documenting and exposing human rights violations," the organization said. "No authoritarian assault will silence our fight for justice."

The maximum prison sentence for being a member of an "undesirable" organization is four years, while organization leaders can receive up to six years in prison.

Russia's Justice Ministry currently lists more than 200 organizations as "undesirable," including The Moscow Times, which was hit with the label last summer.

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