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Russia Moves to Streamline Process for Labeling Groups as ‘Extremist’

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Russian lawmakers have approved legislation that dramatically simplifies the process for designating organizations as "extremist."

The bill, passed in the lower-house State Duma in its third and final reading, allows authorities to classify an organization as extremist based solely on a single criminal conviction under Article 282.1 of the Criminal Code, which pertains to the organization of extremist activities, for any of its members.

The measure eliminates the previous requirement for a separate court ruling to ban or dissolve a group before labeling it as extremist.

The changes, which amend multiple laws including the federal statutes on extremism and mass media, are part of a broader legislative push by the Kremlin to tighten its grip on civil society.

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Under the new rules, there is no distinction between registered organizations and informal associations — both can now be blacklisted if just one member is convicted under the extremism law.

The federal registry will also now be referred to as the "list of organizations recognized as extremist in accordance with Russian legislation." Previously, only groups that had been formally dissolved by court order under the law "On Counteracting Extremism" could be added.

Officials say the overhaul will make it easier to prevent potentially dangerous groups from causing harm and will streamline legal procedures for enforcement.

But critics say the legislation significantly weakens judicial oversight and opens the door to broad, unchecked suppression of political and civil activity.

Lawyer Kaloy Akhilgov told the RBC news website that the development "removes full judicial oversight and undermines the principle of individual criminal responsibility."

He noted that the new law allows for entire associations to be deemed extremist even if only one member is convicted, and that membership itself, even if passive, could now carry serious legal consequences.

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