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Russia Declares Zimin Foundation ‘Undesirable’

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Zimin Foundation President Boris Zimin. **Zimin Foundation**

Russian authorities on Tuesday designated the U.K.-based Zimin Foundation as an “undesirable” organization, accusing it of funding initiatives hostile to Russia.

The Prosecutor General’s Office alleged the foundation, established by exiled philanthropist Boris Zimin and his late father Dmitry Zimin, had provided “financial and informational support to extremists, terrorists and foreign agents.” It also accused the foundation of “intensifying anti-Russian rhetoric” since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Russian prosecutors claim that the Zimin Foundation launched a grant program in February this year to support Russian-language projects that had lost U.S. financial backing, awarding dozens of grants to journalism and academic initiatives deemed hostile to the state.

The “undesirable” designation bars the Zimin Foundation from operating in Russia. Under Russian law, individuals found to be affiliated with “undesirable” organizations face up to four years in prison, while their leaders face up to six years.

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Following the designation announcement on Tuesday, the foundation reportedly urged Russian partners to "carefully assess all risks" and pledged legal assistance to those who choose to continue working with it.

"The Zimin Foundation will continue its work, but the safety of our partners remains our highest priority. We will fully respect any decision you make regarding future cooperation," the foundation said in a statement, according to exiled journalist Dmitry Kolezev.

Russia introduced its "undesirable" law in 2015, using it to crack down on independent media, opposition groups and foreign organizations. Hundreds of organizations are currently blacklisted, including The Moscow Times, which was added to the list last summer.

The Zimin Foundation was founded after Russian authorities labeled its predecessor, the Dynasty Foundation, a "foreign agent" in 2015. Boris Zimin, who has lived abroad since 2004, was designated a foreign agent in 2022 and sentenced in absentia to nine years in prison on fraud charges earlier this year.

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