



Illustration: Ekaterina Simacheva for OVD-Info

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НОВОСТИ

OVD-Info was recognized as a foreign agent. What's next?

On September 29, the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation included the independent human rights media project OVD-Info in the list of «unregistered public associations performing the functions of a foreign agent».

ОБ ЭТОМ НИКТО НЕ УЗНАЕТ

Если об этом никто не напишет. Подпишитесь на регулярные пожертвования ОВД-Инфо, чтобы плохие дела не оставались в тишине.

ПОДПИСАТЬСЯ

Русская версия ОВД-Инфо признали иноагентом. Что дальше?

We consider what happened as an act of political pressure on OVD-Info. The inclusion in the list took place amid a **broad public campaign** for the abolition of legislation on foreign agents, which was initiated by OVD-Info among others and which has already been joined by 229 institutions and more than 140 thousand people across the country. By the way, simultaneously 24 new entries were added to the list of «media performing the functions of a foreign agent»: the convener of Mediazona outlet, human rights organization Zona Prava and 22 persons, most of them coordinators of the Golos movement that monitors the elections throughout Russia. Also, two organizations, from Nizhny Novgorod and Ivanovo, were added to the list of «NGOs performing the functions of a foreign agent.»

Inclusion in the list did not come to us as a surprise. Every day, for almost ten years, we have been writing about politically motivated persecution, and we are not easily surprised. Especially now. We see the weather and how independent media, journalists and civil initiatives are being labelled foreign agents one by one.

OVD-Info is an independent project. This means that we do not depend on any structures, either political movements or international foundations. We are not «foreign agents». We are not agents: we do not follow anyone's orders and do not obey anyone's will. We are not foreign. On the contrary, we are probably the most popular human rights project in Russia: OVD-Info only depends on hundreds of thousands of citizens who support us with donations, reposts, volunteering and simply with kind words.

Apparently, the authorities consider our project hostile. But we are not fighting either with the authorities or for power — we are defending the right of citizens to freedom of assembly. We strive to ensure that the state respects the basic rights guaranteed to all by our Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights. And we are sure that no state

is capable of stable development without protecting the rights of its citizens. This is obvious not only to so-called «liberals» but also to any statesperson. In fact, we have always worked and continue to work with the state human rights institutions represented by the office of the federal commissioner for human rights, the offices of regional commissioners and members of the presidential human rights council.

The topics of protest rallies and the political views of their participants do not matter for us. What is important is that all have the right to freedom of assembly. That is precisely why independence for us means independence from any political parties and civil initiatives — among other things. That is precisely why we protect everyone who faces violation of their right to assembly — be that left, right, opposition, pro-government, supporters of Navalny, Communist Party activists, journalists of independent publications, or journalists of Russia Today.

But we see the current government is not about statesmanship and concern for the rights of citizens. On the contrary: those who work on the development of our civil society and effectively contribute to the strengthening of the state are declared enemies, foreign agents.

We are sure that the campaign launched by the authorities against civil initiatives and the media is disastrous not only for the Russian civil society but also for the state itself. But above all, this campaign will hurt people: in the case of the media, their readers who risk being left without alternative sources of information, and in the case of human rights projects, those whose rights are violated may find themselves facing the system alone.

The foreign agent status is not a «quality mark» but the black spot. This is not only and not so much about labels and disclaimers or filing additional reports. The point is that the law itself allows a lasso being thrown at any unwelcome

initiative, and then tightening it at will. Since the foreign agent legislation was first introduced in 2012, obligations of those on the list have been constantly expanding and opportunities shrinking. In fact, any «foreign agent» organization can be forcibly liquidated at any time, and its leaders arrested. Recently, the same sword of Damocles has been hanging over all unwanted people who can be labelled «foreign agents» in a personal capacity. In fact, this status is practically incompatible with either professional or personal life.

WHAT WILL WE DO IN THIS REGARD?

First and most importantly: OVD-Info will continue to work as usual. It will be more difficult for us due to the new circumstances (for example we will have to hang a stupid box with that «black spot» on the website). But society does not need us any less: information still protects people and still no one should be left alone to face the system.

Secondly, we will challenge in the court the inclusion of our project in the list of foreign agents. We have little hope of a quick victory in the Russian courts, but we believe that sooner or later justice will prevail in the European Court of Human Rights.

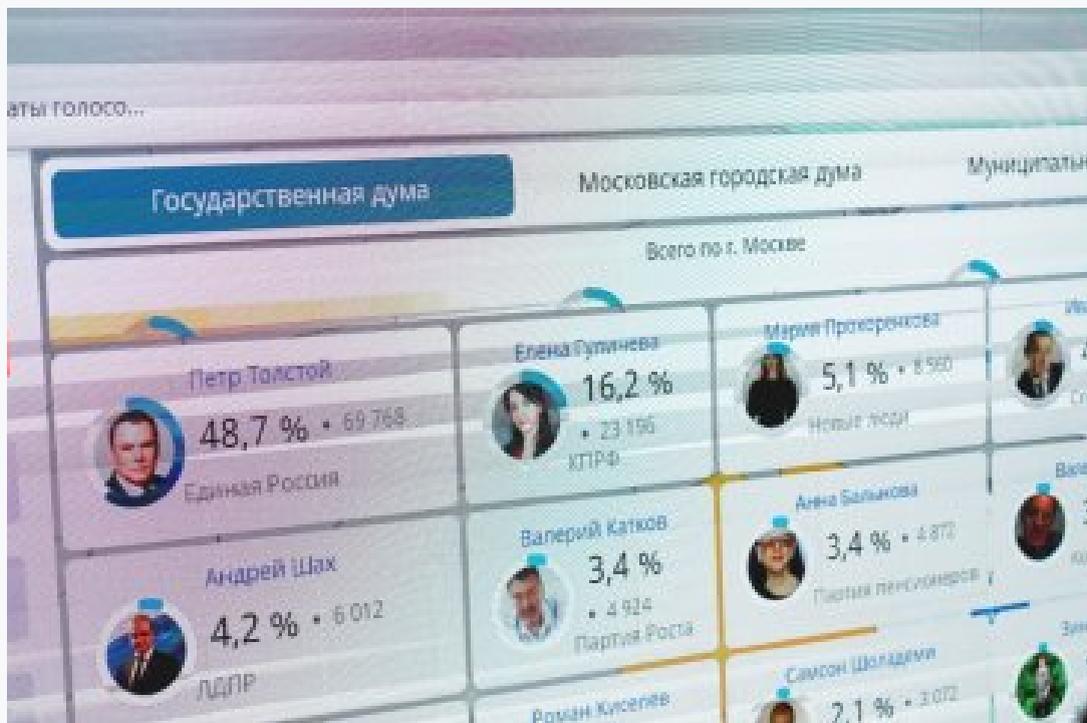
Thirdly, we call for solidarity with all initiatives, the media and journalists who have been subjected to such an attack in recent months. We will strenuously demand the repeal of the foreign agents legislation and urge you to join this campaign. Start by [signing our petition](#). In addition, it is important to support those who face government pressure. On [this site](#), you can choose who you want to support financially — so far, the status of a foreign agent does not impose any additional risks on donors and beneficiaries.

ЧТО Я МОГУ С ЭТИМ СДЕЛАТЬ?

Прочитать, рассказать, поддержать. Подпишитесь на регулярные пожертвования ОВД-Инфо, чтобы как можно больше людей узнали о политических репрессиях в России сегодня.

ПОДДЕРЖАТЬ

Ещё почитать



Угрозы, задержания и насилие на избирательных участках: итоги трехдневного голосования

Трехдневное голосование в России завершилось задержаниями на избирательных участках и давлением на наблюдателей и журналистов. Такого большого числа нарушений эксперты не фиксировали с 2011 года.