

U.S. NGO Ordered Out Over USAID Funding

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russian authorities have ordered a U.S. political advocacy group to cease its work in the country on the grounds that it is funded by a U.S. government agency.

Officials told the International Republican Institute to halt its activities in Russia on Thursday for receiving financing from the U.S. Agency for International Development, Lisa Gates, a spokeswoman for the institute, told RIA-Novosti.

USAID, which has worked in Russia since 1992, was told to leave Russia earlier this year. The development agency had spent more than \$2.7 billion on Russia-focused humanitarian programs in the past two decades, a third of which was dedicated to promoting democracy.

On Thursday, the Foreign Ministry did not immediately comment on the potential closure of the International Republican Institute, which says on its [website](#) that it focuses on helping political parties broaden their appeal, ensuring that they rule justly once elected and aiding

civil society in guaranteeing good governance.

Efforts to pressure the institute come three weeks after a law came into force obliging all foreign-funded Russian NGOs engaging in political activity to register as "foreign agents." As part of the legislation, noncompliant NGO staff have been threatened with prison terms of up to two years.

However, the International Republican Institute and USAID were not affected by the law, as they were registered as branches of Washington-based organizations.

Prominent locally registered NGOs including the Moscow Helsinki Group, Transparency International and Memorial have refused to register as foreign agents in the wake of the controversial Nov. 21 law, seeking domestic sources of funding instead.

Russian officials have repeatedly said that U.S.-funded NGOs were behind Orange Revolution-style uprisings that toppled authoritarian governments in Ukraine and Georgia in the mid-2000s.

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