

U.S. Think Tank Sees 'Return of the Iron Fist' in Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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With the introduction of harsh penalties for unsanctioned demonstrations and new rules requiring some non-governmental organizations to register as "foreign agents," Russia became less free in 2012, according to a [new report](#) by Freedom House.

Russia earned six points for political rights and five for civil liberties — seven points being the worst — and was deemed "unfree" by the authors of "Freedom in the World 2013," an annual report by the Washington-based think tank.

In a section titled, the "Return of the Iron Fist in Russia," the report said Putin had moved in a "calculated way" to suppress independent political and civil activism, citing new restrictions on fundraising by NGOs, controls on the Internet, and a recent ban on U.S. adoptions.

Putin also "heaped contempt on the values of open societies," the report said.

Putin co-led the unfree world, blocking international action that could "help free the Syrian people," providing diplomatic cover for dictators, and setting an example for Eurasian autocrats, Freedom House said.

U.S. President Barack Obama further weakened Russian civil society by "utterly fail[ing] to offer a credible response" to the Kremlin's decision to close the U.S. Agency for International Development's mission in the country in October.

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