

U.S. Frets Over NGO Checks

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The U.S. Embassy in Moscow has expressed "great concern" about reports that government inspectors have recently searched hundreds of nongovernmental organizations, including prominent human rights groups, and asked the Kremlin for an explanation.

"We are following reports of the unprecedented inspections of NGOs taking place across Russia with great concern. The embassy has shared its concerns with the government and asked for clarity as to the purpose of the inspections," the embassy said in Twitter messages late Thursday.

The presidential human rights council also questioned the legality and purpose of the "mass searches" in a letter to Prosecutor General [Yury Chaika](#) posted on the [council's website](#) on Friday.

Prosecutors have said the searches were aimed at battling "extremism," but the involvement of fire, tax, labor and other inspectors helped create the impression that "the purpose of the searches is to discover any kind of infraction," a group of council members wrote.

They added that it was "essential" to hold a special meeting with representatives of the prosecutor's office in the near future to discuss the methods and results of the searches.

Prominent human rights group Memorial and vote monitor Golos have been among hundreds of NGOs in at least 10 regions to face unannounced inspections in recent weeks.

Inspectors conducted a second day of searches at Memorial on Friday and promised a third visit this week, the organization's leader, Arseny Roginsky, told Interfax.

The prosecutor's office has said the checks were part of the agency's plan for the first six months of this year, but did not elaborate.

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