

Washington Calls NGO Checks 'Witch Hunt'

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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U.S. State Department representative Victoria Nuland said that the U.S. administration was concerned by the ongoing checks of nongovernmental organizations in Russia, and that the checks resembled a witch hunt, a news report said Friday.

"These inspections appear to be aimed at undermining important civil society activities throughout the country," GlobalPost quoted Nuland as saying.

Law enforcement officials have visited the offices of several major human rights organizations for unscheduled inspections in recent days.

Amnesty International, For Human Rights, Memorial, the Public Verdict Fund and the Moscow Helsinki Group were among the organizations visited by police, the prosecutor's office and tax officials, some of them more than once.

The checks were conducted in line with the "foreign agents" law passed last year, which stipulates that NGOs that are engaged in political activity and receive financing from abroad must register as "foreign agents."

The Justice Ministry's press service confirmed on Monday that the checks of NGOs were conducted to reveal "foreign agents."

President Vladimir Putin said recently the searches would reveal whether NGOs were following the law and, in an apparent nod to critics' concerns, asked human rights ombudsman Vladimir Lukin to keep the process under control.

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