

Levada Center Fears Closure After Warning

By [The Moscow Times](#)

May 21, 2013

The  **Moscow Times**

Independent pollster Levada Center has said that it could have to close after prosecutors warned the organization against violating legislation governing foreign-funded NGOs.

"The warning puts the Yury Levada Center in a very difficult situation, practically forcing it to cease its activities as an independent research organization conducting regular public opinion polls," Lev Gudkov, the pollster's director, said in a statement on Monday.

Gudkov said that prosecutors clearly interpret Levada Center's analytical articles and opinion polls as "political activity" and are trying to force the pollster to register as a "foreign agent" in keeping with legislation that came into effect late last year.

Levada Center posted the text of the warning issued by the Savyolovskaya District Prosecutor's Office on its website on Monday, saying it carried with it the threat of sanctions and could undermine its reputation.

In the statement, Gudkov stressed that Levada Center is a noncommercial organization and that overseas grants and payments by foreign clients make up an insignificant share of the center's budget, between 1.5 and 3 percent.

While the "foreign agents" law puts the organization's future at risk, Gudkov said the pollster plans to continue all its projects, including the Public Opinion Bulletin magazine, maintaining its website and conducting surveys.

But the center is not going to file a lawsuit over prosecutors' warning due to protracted legal procedures. "At present, the Levada Center's administration is holding consultations with lawyers and looking for possible ways out of the current situation," Gudkov said.

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