

NGO Law to Protect Russia from Foreign Interference, Says Putin

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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NAANTALI, Finland, June 24 (RIA Novosti) — The law obliging non-governmental organizations funded from abroad to register as foreign agents is designed to protect the country's domestic policies from foreign influence, President Vladimir Putin said.

The law "concerns only those organizations that receive funding from abroad and are involved in domestic political activity. Russia wants to protect its political activity inside the country from outside interference and at least to be informed about what is going on in the sphere of [NGO] financing," Putin said at a joint news conference with his Finnish counterpart, Sauli Niinisto.

Putin emphasized that organizations engaging in domestic political life and receiving foreign funding were not prohibited from working in Russia.

"All they need is to register in a certain way and then they are free to go ahead with their

work," the president said.

He reiterated his earlier statement that the Russian law was far more liberal in comparison with similar legislation in the U.S. or a measure recently adopted in India.

Putin also said that Russia should pay attention to opinions expressed by reputed human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch, because "it gives us a reason to analyze the situation and make certain conclusions."

The so-called NGO law has been criticized for its use of the term "foreign agent," which can be construed as entailing spying or treachery. Although the government maintains that the law is vital to preventing foreign meddling in the nation's political life, it has already been applied to NGOs involved in apparently apolitical activities such as wildlife conservation, public health and vote monitoring.

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