

Moscow Gives Office to Evicted Human Rights NGO, Report Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Billionaire politician Mikhail Prokhorov, who will donate funds to the For Human Rights movement to pay for a year's rent. **Igor Tabakov**

The Moscow authorities have donated an office to a Russian human rights NGO that had been evicted from its previous home in July, a news report said Thursday.

The For Human Rights movement's new downtown office will be free of charge to the organization for 49 years, an unidentified City Hall official told RIA Novosti.

The NGO was forcibly evicted from its original Moscow office in June in an overnight operation by private security guards with the attendance of the police after the authorities claimed its lease had expired.

The organization's leader, Lev Ponomaryov, told journalists that he was beaten by security forces during the eviction. Ponomaryov, 73, called the group's ousting a "forcible takeover,"

and claimed that the rent had been paid through the end of July.

Russia's human rights ombudsman Vladimir Lukin said the Moscow authorities and the Interior Ministry had violated the law during the eviction. The police maintained they had only attended to maintain order and said there was no violence.

For Human Rights is one of hundreds of NGOs that came under increased government scrutiny following a new law that took effect in Russia in November, requiring NGOs that receive foreign funding and engage in political activities to register as "foreign agents." Hundreds of NGO offices across the country were raided and searched by police throughout the spring.

Lukin filed an appeal on Aug. 30 to revise the law's definitions of "foreign agents" and "political activities," which he called "politically and legally ambiguous," Kommersant reported earlier this week.

Billionaire politician Mikhail Prokhorov, the leader of the Civic Platform party, pledged in June to donate 1.5 million rubles (\$45,000) to pay a year's rent for the For Human Rights movement.

City Hall also donated free 49-year office leases to another human rights NGO, Hot Line, and the In Defense of Prisoners' Rights NGO, the unidentified city official said.

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