

Russian Duma Introduces Amendment Defining 'Political Activity' to NGO Law

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Representatives of all factions in the State Duma have introduced an amendment to the law on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that specifies the notion of "political activity," the RBC news agency reported Friday.

The draft law, published by the Justice Ministry in January, suggests that operations in a number of spheres including national defense, foreign policy and others, be classified as restricted political activity.

However, the law permits NGOs to participate in rallies and public protests, to conduct any activity during elections and to influence public opinion, RBC reported.

The amendment was criticized by Alexei Kudrin's Committee of Civil Initiatives and the Council of Human Rights. The Council's representative Mikhail Fedotov said that, according to the new definition, "every activity of NGOs can be defined as political," though adding that the current wording is too vague.

The law requiring NGOs engaged in political activities to register as foreign agents was

adopted in 2012. Since then, it has sparked disputes among politicians and human rights activists, RBC reported.

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