

Why We're Closing VTimes, One of Russia's Last Independent News Outlets

The "foreign agent" label assigned to the website administrator of vtimes.io has destroyed our business model and we see no viable way to continue.

By [VTimes](https://vtimes.io)

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The independent news site says its "foreign agent" labeling destroyed its business model. **MT**

Dear readers and friends of VTimes,

We are forced to inform you that we do not see an opportunity to continue publishing.

In the three weeks since the Justice Department added the vtimes.io website's administrator to its list of "foreign agent" media, we have studied seven scenarios for the continuation of VTimes' activities — with or without this status. In each scenario, there was a risk of criminal prosecution of our employees with the possibility of imprisonment.

But the reason for our decision is not just out of fear of criminal prosecution for honestly performing our professional duty. When we launched VTimes last year, we announced that we were not creating a propaganda tool, but a high-quality and independent media outlet and a platform for the free exchange of constructive opinions.

We stated that we want to find positive examples and ideas for the development of business and society — without turning a blind eye to existing problems and not avoiding acute topics, naturally.

And today we are proud to say: We did it! But we have seen for ourselves that the authorities have no need for professional, non-government-controlled media.

Related article: [Russia Declares Independent VTimes News Site a 'Foreign Agent'](#)

The "foreign agent" label assigned to the website administrator of vtimes.io has destroyed VTimes' business model, and we created this publication exactly as a business. Advertisers and partners do not understand how to cooperate with an "inoagent (the abbreviation for 'foreign agent' in Russian – Ed.)" – and we cannot blame them for this. Voluntary donations from readers are not enough to fund a high-quality media outlet.

Even worse, the status of "foreign agent" deprives VTimes of most of its coverage: Many officials, businessmen and even analysts are afraid to give comments to "foreign agents" – and we also understand why that is. Essentially, VTimes is being pushed into the opposition political media niche. But we envisioned and have created a completely different outlet.

Therefore, we have decided to stop publishing VTimes on June 12, Russia's Independence Day.

We thank you, dear readers and partners, for being with us! We thank our ambassadors for their courage and support! We thank our donors, whose support has greatly helped us make VTimes even better! From June 12, fundraising will cease, and the funds already collected will be used to fulfill obligations to employees and partners.

Once again, a huge thank you to everyone! Closing the VTimes project does not mean that we are abandoning our principles and leaving the profession.

The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.

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