

Past Financial Declarations Made by Russian Officials Begin to Vanish

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Past financial disclosures made by Russian officials have begun to disappear from government websites, just months after President Vladimir Putin signed a decree waiving a legal requirement that the declarations be published online, independent news outlet [Mozhem Obyasnit reported](#) Thursday.

Each year, millions of Russian government officials are required to declare their income and property, as well as those of their spouses and dependent children. These declarations are then published online.

This changed in December when Putin [suspended](#) the mandatory publication of officials' declarations for the duration of the war in Ukraine.

Journalists and anti-corruption advocates have [decried](#) the move as a major blow to government transparency.

The Russian Foreign Ministry website no longer displays its officials' financial declarations for 2021. Instead, a message referring to the December decree can be found. Similarly, the Transport Ministry's website has removed all previously available declarations.

Related article: [Putin Waives Peacetime Requirement for Officials to Release Tax Returns](#)

While Putin's decree is being used by government bodies to justify the removal of previously published declarations, the decree only suspends the requirement to submit new disclosures and does not permit the removal of previously submitted ones.

The head of Transparency International Russia, Ilya Shumanov, told Mozhem Obyasnit that the deletion of officials' old declarations was illegal.

Shumanov said that public officials have long complained of having to publically disclose their finances and had tried to get the policy reversed. "Now they aren't even looking for legal reasons, violating anti-corruption laws," he said.

As part of a nationwide anti-corruption campaign launched back in 2008, the Russian government began requiring top-level officials to file financial disclosures each spring.

Initially, most of the information was redacted on privacy grounds and was only available to anti-corruption investigators. However, following a series of amendments to the legislation, each official's full disclosure was made accessible to the general public online.

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