

Investigators Open Case Against Blogger for 'Calling for Riots'

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The extremism division of the Investigative Committee has opened a case against former Novaya Gazeta correspondent Arkady Babchenko for "calling for riots" in a blog post about a demonstration organized by the opposition group For Fair Elections, according to a statement by prosecutors.

In the LiveJournal post, Babchenko said that if authorities at City Hall did not approve a rally at Lubyanskaya Ploshchad, protesters should go there anyway and break through police cordons if necessary.

He also wrote that it was necessary to create a "Russian Maidan," referencing the tent city created during 2004 protests in Ukraine.

The criminal case was initiated by Public Chamber member Boris Yakemenko, who, in a March 1 letter to the prosecutor's office, said Babchenko violated criminal statutes, including those related to forcible seizure of power and public calls for extremist activity. Investigators opened a case with a different charge, of "calling for mass riots," according to a copy of a letter from the prosecutor's office posted by Yakemenko on his LiveJournal page.

Babchenko said his words were taken out of context, emphasizing that he had advocated only for peaceful protests.

"Yakemenko, like always, is lying. Lying brazenly and shamelessly," he said in a March 2 LiveJournal post.

Babchenko told Gazeta.ru on Tuesday: "In our country, if a good man doesn't have a criminal case opened against him yet, it's to some extent just plain bad form. It has been known for a long time already that anyone can be put in jail. The allegations that I 'called for riots' in my post are simply false. And Yakemenko's behavior is a typical denunciation."

Boris Yakemenko is the brother of influential Federal Youth Agency head Vasily Yakemenko.

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