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Lawsuits Pour Into St. Petersburg Courts Over Dozhd Poll

By The Moscow Times

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More than 20 civil lawsuits seeking to recover damages for moral harm were filed in St. Petersburg against liberal-leaning television channel Dozhd for a poll it ran about World War II.

BBC Russia reported that the suits were filed in various district courts from Jan. 30 to Feb. 3 after the channel last week posted a poll asking whether the city should have been surrendered to Germany during the Siege of Leningrad, which killed about 750,000 civilians during a three year blockade, according to some estimates. The poll was quickly removed after complaints were received and an apology note was posted.

St. Petersburg news website Fontanka.ru reported that a district court rejected one application within four hours as the request was "not within the jurisdiction of this court."

Of the 23 lawsuits, six have reportedly been returned to their sources.

Dozhd, known for its independent coverage of Russian politics, has been dropped by the country's largest cable providers in connection with the poll and outraged St. Petersburg lawmakers have asked the Prosecutor General's Office to check the channel for extremism.

The directors of Dozhd said earlier this week that the actions of the cable companies could threaten the channel with closure and attributed them to a politically-motivated campaign orchestrated by the Kremlin.

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