

Journalist Questioned After Asking for Troops to 'Liberate' Russians from Corrupt Officials

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Roman Romanenko, who jokingly asked for troops to be dispatched to the Vologda region.

A Russian regional governor has asked prosecutors to investigate a local journalist after he jokingly asked President Vladimir Putin to dispatch troops to protect the region's Russian speakers from corrupt officials.

In his mock appeal on Facebook to Putin earlier this month, Vologda region journalist Roman Romanenko cited the deployment of Russian troops in Crimea, which the Kremlin attributed to the need to protect the peninsula's Russian-speaking population, and asked the president to extend similar protection to Vologda.

"We are all entirely Russian speakers here, and our rights are much infringed upon," Romanenko said on Facebook. "Our ill are unable to obtain the medicines and treatment they

need, the level of our education is dropping every year, children's after-school enrichment programs are being shut down, agriculture has been practically destroyed. We are all suffering very much."

"Meanwhile, the occupants who have seized power as a result of dishonest elections are doing nothing for the subjugated population," he said.

Asking for troops to be dispatched to the Vologda region," Romanenko said the region's people "would be very grateful and can guarantee you that no war of resistance against the liberators would follow." Any sanctions against Moscow's interference in Vologda would be highly unlikely, he added.

While the post had received more than 4,000 "likes" by Tuesday, prosecutors summoned Romanenko for questioning after Vologda regional Governor Oleg Kuvshinnikov demanded an investigation on possible extremism charges, the journalist said, Dozhd reported Monday.

Romanenko said the investigator was amiable and seemed "slightly embarrassed that he had to take time off from fighting corruption and engage in some nonsense," but still asked for "facts and documents, evidencing the decay of agriculture."

"Drive 10 kilometers away from Vologda and see for yourself," the journalist said he had responded.

After publication of the post, vandals defaced Romanenko's home with a crossed-out swastika on his front door — in an apparent reference to Moscow's description of Ukrainian supporters of national sovereignty as "fascists."

The vandals also wrote: "Maidan stop," in a reference to the center and symbol of Ukraine's political protests that toppled its Moscow-backed administration.

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