

Moscow Court Upholds Extremism Warning Issued to Ekho Moskvyy Radio Station

By [Anna Dolgov](#)

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Ekho Moskvyy is known for devoting its airtime to the opposition.

A Moscow court rejected an appeal Tuesday brought by liberal-leaning radio station Ekho Moskvyy against warnings it had received from Russia's media watchdog for what the latter deemed was an "extremist" on-air segment about fighting in Ukraine, the TASS news agency reported.

In October, the station received two separate warnings from Roskomnadzor — one for its radio broadcast and another for its website — claiming that two journalists' on-air eyewitness accounts of fighting between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian rebels at Donetsk Airport constituted "information that justifies committing war crimes," editor-in-chief Alexei Venediktov wrote on his blog at the time.

Venediktov had appealed to a court to have the warnings retracted, arguing that a broadcaster cannot be held responsible under Russian law for what its guests say during live programs. An additional warning within a year would give the government grounds to shut down the station.

Venediktov, who said he would bring the court's decision to the attention of the European Court of Human Rights, has 10 days to appeal the latest verdict, TASS reported.

An unidentified Roskomnadzor lawyer claimed in court Monday that the content it had deemed extremist had been scripted, an allegation the station denied, the RBC news agency reported.

Venediktov also highlighted some apparent inconsistencies in the Roskomnadzor case materials.

Ekho Moskvyy received the warning at 3:54 p.m. on Oct. 31, but the watchdog agency's memo cited as the grounds for the warning had a time stamp of 4 p.m. that same day, he said, RBC reported.

"So first we had the execution, and then the sentencing," Venediktov was quoted as saying.

An unidentified Roskomnadzor lawyer shrugged off the discrepancy, claiming it could have been caused by a "technical glitch," the report said.

Despite being owned by the Russia's largest media holding, state-controlled Gazprom Media, Ekho Moskvyy is known for devoting its airtime to the opposition.

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