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Russia Drops Charges Against Activist Who Warned of Russian Troops in Ukraine

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Svetlana Davydova with her daughter Kassandra

Russia has dropped treason charges against an activist accused of phoning the Ukrainian embassy in Moscow last year to warn that Russian soldiers might be heading to eastern Ukraine, her lawyer said Friday.

Svetlana Davydova was arrested at her home west of Moscow in January on suspicion of making the call after overhearing a soldier's conversation about troops from a nearby military base being sent to Ukraine.

A mother of seven, Davydova was released from pretrial detention in February after nearly 20,000 people signed a petition to free her.

Davydova's lawyer Ivan Pavlov said prosecutors had dropped the charges, which could have put her in prison for 20 years if she had been convicted.

"Criminal proceedings against Svetlana Davydova have been dismissed for lack of evidence. She is completely cleared of charges of treason," Pavlov wrote on Facebook.

The 37-year-old ruled out seeking compensation for the time she was detained. "I won't be asking for any compensation. Let any money that I may win in court go to social programs," she said, according to news agency Interfax.

Davydova's husband Anatoly Gorlov previously said that investigators from the Federal Security Service, the successor to the Soviet KGB, arrested his wife in January at their home in Vyazma, some 250 kilometers west of Moscow.

Russia adamantly denies Western accusations that it is sending arms or soldiers to eastern Ukraine to support pro-Russian rebels fighting Ukrainian government troops in a conflict that has killed more than 6,000 since last April.

Pavlov questioned why the case was opened against his client. "Sometimes we try to find malice in that which can be explained by ordinary stupidity," he said.

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