

Russian Lawmaker Forced to Pay Damages to 'Leviathan' Actor for Defamation

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A scene from the film *Leviathan*

A Russian court has ordered a regional lawmaker to pay 50,000 rubles (\$992) to an actor in the Oscar-nominated film “Leviathan” in compensation for a derogatory article about his role in the film, but ruled that the lawmaker did not need to publish a retraction, news reports said.

A court in the city of Samara — located on the Volga River 1,000 kilometers east of Moscow — also ordered regional lawmaker Dmitry Sivirkin on Monday to pay 28,000 rubles in court fees for the lawsuit brought against him by Valery Grishko, an actor and stage director at the Samara Academic Gorky Drama Theater, Interfax reported, citing Grishko's spokesperson Irina Besedina.

Grishko played an Orthodox priest in Andrei Zvyagintsev's film, which has won awards and been lavished with praise abroad, but banned by officials in several Russian regions who argue that the story about one man's fight against corrupt government and church officials cast Russia in an unfavorable light.

The Samara lawmaker's article, published on the region's online portal Samara.ru, relied on particularly charged language to accuse the film's cast and crew of a lack of patriotism.

See also: [Oscar Contender 'Leviathan' Ruffles Feathers in Russia](#)

In the article, Sivirkin described Grishko and his character as *bydlyatina* — a term derived from a crude Russian word, *bydlo*, which can loosely be translated as "scum." The lawmaker also accused Grishko of being a "not particularly literate, unprincipled *sovok*" — a derogatory Soviet-era term — who would "both take the money, and smear [Russia] with liquid poop," according to excerpts quoted by Russian media. The article is no longer available on the Samara.ru website.

Defending his language, the lawmaker said the term *bydlyatina* was not directed at the actor "personally," but against the "phenomena and the role that he played," Interfax reported.

"Without having the least idea about the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church, he butted in to play a prelate," the lawmaker was quoted as saying.

Both sides said they were satisfied with the court's verdict.

"I liked the court's decision very much," the lawmaker said, Interfax reported. "First, it did not envision any retraction, which means that the court agreed with all the terms I used in my review of Mr. Grishko's role in 'Leviathan.' Second, I'm quite satisfied with the price of 50,000 rubles to pay for the opportunity to call things by their own names," Interfax reported.

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