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# Chief of Turkish Branch of Russia's Sputnik Agency Barred from Turkey

By The Moscow Times

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Tural Kerimov

The chief editor of Russia's state-run news agency Sputnik in Turkey has been barred from entering the country, the RIA Novosti news agency reported Wednesday.

Tural Kerimov said that he was stopped at Istanbul's Ataturk Airport and given a document saying he was not allowed to enter the country. The paper didn't provide any explanation, he said.

He also said that authorities had stripped him of his journalist's accreditation.

"I was stripped of my press card and residence permit, and after that I was asked to take the first flight back to Russia," Kerimov was quoted as saying by the news agency.

The Turkish authorities and the airport's security service declined to comment when reached by RIA Novosti.

The Sputnik website was blocked in Turkey last Thursday, a move which Russia's Foreign Ministry called “yet another violation of fundamental human rights and freedoms.”

Some State Duma deputies linked the incident with statements on Russian-Turkish relations made by President Vladimir Putin during his annual call-in show last week.

A Turkish representative for media watchdog Reporters Without Borders also attributed the suspension to worsening relations between Russia and Turkey.

Ties between the two countries became significantly strained after a Russian fighter jet was shot down by the Turkish military in November last year.

Sputnik's Turkish office has decided to continue publication of articles on Twitter and Facebook, the news agency's press service said.

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