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Pensioner in Smolensk Region Fined for Complaining to Putin

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Head of the Sychyovsky region Yevgeny Orlov

A pensioner from Russia's western Smolensk region has been fined 5,000 rubles ($75) after complaining to Russian President Vladimir Putin about the head of her local district, government daily Rossiiskaya Gazeta reported Wednesday.

The fine is the result of a defamation lawsuit filed by head of the Sychyovsky region Yevgeny Orlov against 13 local residents. The group had written to President Putin complaining about the difficult socio-economic situation in the area.

“There is virtually no industry or agriculture, there is no investment, jobs are being cut ... There are so many problems in the region: roads, housing services, unemployment, the closure of schools, the deterioration of the health-care system” the letter said.

Residents also accused Orlov of “oppression and humiliation of local people,” “bullying, intimidation, and even persecution.”

The court ruled in Orlov's favor and demanded that the negative information about him be refuted.

Pensioner Olga Vasilieva is to pay the fine as the perceived initiator of the letter.

Orlov initially sought 30,000 rubles ($447) from each of the 13 residents that signed the letter, but later dropped the claim.

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