

Karaulova Testifies on Contacting IS Recruiter After Coming Back to Moscow

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Varvara Karaulova **Moskva News Agency**

A Moscow student facing terrorism-related charges has admitted that she maintained contact with an Islamic State (IS) recruiter after returning to Russia.

Varvara Karaulova admitted in court on Thursday that she did, in fact, contact her fiancé, an IS recruiter, behind the backs of investigators from the Federal Security Service (FSB), Karaulova's lawyer, Ilya Novikov, wrote on his Facebook page.

Karaulova – who legally changed her name to Alexandra Ivanova last year to avoid press attention – is standing trial for attempting to join a terrorist organization. She went missing in late May 2015 and was detained a week later in Turkey together with a group of people traveling to Syria.

After her father brought her back to Moscow, Karaulova cooperated with law enforcement, helping them communicate with the IS recruiter. Initially, investigators said they had no plans to press charges against her. However, in October, she was arrested and placed in pre-

trial detention center pending investigation and trial.

Read more coverage of Varvara Karaulova's trial: [IS Fighter or Girl in Love: The Story of Varvara Karaulova](#)

The defense maintains that Karaulova ran off to Syria, blind with love, to marry her fiancé, who turned out to be an IS recruiter. She only fully realized she had made a mistake after returning to Moscow, they say. However, the prosecution claims Karaulova intended to join the Islamic State terrorist organization and contacted the recruiter without FSB supervision even after coming back home.

According to lawyer Novikov, after returning to Moscow, Karaulova tried to return to a "normal life," taking up jogging and learning Korean. Nonetheless, in August 2015, two months before her arrest, Karaulova started feeling depressed again.

"At some point she opened her Vkontakte page and saw that [her fiancé, the alleged IS recruiter Airat] Samatov kept messaging her, asking for her forgiveness and telling her how much he loved her. She noticed that FSB operatives messaged him back several times. She couldn't help herself and started messaging him, too. Several days into it, she was messaging him every day," Novikov wrote.

Karaulova didn't trust the man anymore, but didn't have the will power to break the relationship off, he added. Meanwhile, FSB operatives were also reading the correspondence.

"When Samatov asked her whether she would try to travel to him once again, she never said 'no,'" Novikov wrote, "but all the options he offered her were so unrealistic that she didn't even have to invent excuses."

In late September, Karaulova confessed to her parents that she was still writing to Samatov and asked them to help her stop. Her father then took all her gadgets away from her.

On Oct. 27, Karaulova was arrested. If convicted, she faces up to 5 years in prison.

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