

Federal Police Raid Russian Classroom and Arrest High Schooler for Online Extremism

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Federal police raided a classroom at a high school in Perm this October, in search of a 16-year-old student named “Mark R.,” according to the local news website “[Periscope](#)” (unrelated to the video-streaming app). When Federal Security Service agents found Mark, they arrested him on the spot and took him in for questioning.

In a story that’s now familiar in Russia, the boy is in trouble because of something he wrote online.

The supposedly criminal remark occurred last spring, when Mark got into an argument on Vkontakte, Russia’s largest social network, with a Christian student from his school. At one point in the exchange, Mark wrote, “Churches should be burned down.” According to Periscope, Mark self-identifies as pagan.

Local police reportedly conducted a linguistic analysis of Mark's comment about churches — a favorite tactic in Russian law enforcement — and determined that his words “illegally advocated hostility.”

Federal agents also visited Mark's school twice for “explanatory conversations,” meeting with him and with his teachers, according to the local radio station “[Echo of Perm](#).” The teenager then deleted his remark about burning down churches.

But that wasn't enough, it seems, and Mark now faces five years in prison, if convicted of advocating extremism. After his interrogation by federal police, he was released on his own recognizance.

According to Echo of Perm, the arrest occurred in October, but Periscope, which was the first to report the incident, only learned about it this Monday.

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