

Russian Court Drops Charges Against Atheist for Saying 'God Doesn't Exist'

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Anton Vaganov / TASS

A Russian court has dropped criminal charges against a man accused of offending religious believers with his social media posts.

Viktor Krasnov, a resident of the southern city of Stavropol, was standing trial for writing a comment online that “God doesn't exist” and calling the Bible is a “collection of Jewish fairytales.” If convicted, Krasnov would have faced up to a year in prison.

However, on Wednesday, the Stavropol court [closed the case](#), bringing the multi-year saga to an end.

Prosecutors launched the case against Krasnov in 2014, after two users of Vkontakte, Russia's largest social network, complained about his comments. It was the first time Russia brought criminal charges against anyone for offending religious believers' feelings.

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At first, counter-extremism officers tried to charge Krasnov with “inciting hatred toward religion.” When that failed, they tried the charge of “insulting religious believers' feelings,” Krasnov's lawyer, Andrei Sabinin, [told](#) The Moscow Times in March 2016.

Then, the two “victims” — the young men who initiated the case — refused to participate in the trial. Eventually, they were forced to testify. In the dock, one accuser struggled to prove he was religious, while “the other looked more prepped,” Sabinin said.

The lawyer believed both men were used by law enforcement to “complete a plan” to produce a certain number of convictions.

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