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Russia Investigates Ukrainian Blogger for Spreading Fake News About 300 Deaths in Kemerovo Fire

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Yevgeny Volnov **Youtube**

Russian investigators have accused a Ukrainian blogger of spreading fake news about the number of people who died in Sunday's shopping mall fire in Siberia.

Emergency officials have said that 60 people, including 41 children, died in the fire that swept through the Winter Cherry shopping mall in the city of Kemerovo. At an angry protest two days after the fire, residents accused authorities of covering up the real death toll of the fire, citing reports published on social media that said 300 people may have died.

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Russia's Investigative Committee said on Tuesday that a Ukrainian prankster calling himself Yevgeny Volnov was responsible for spreading the fake death toll on social media.

Volnov is accused of spreading "deliberately false information about the number of people who died in the fire with the aim of destabilizing the situation in the region," Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement late Tuesday.

In an online video posted by Volnov on the day of the tragedy, the blogger is heard posing as an emergency services official in a prank phone call to a morgue in Kemerovo.

He asks the bewildered medical worker on the line if there is space for at least 300 dead bodies.

In comments to the RBC business portal, Volnov confirmed that he was the author of the recordings and said that 300 was an estimate based on the number of seats in the shopping mall's cinema complex.

The Investigative Committee has said that it may press charges against Volnov.

Wednesday has been declared a day of national mourning in Russia.

An earlier version of this article stated that 64 people died in the fire, according to Russian authorities. The official death toll was later revised to 60, the Investigative Committee said in a statement.

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