

Russian Businesswoman Charged With Extremism for Parodying Judges

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An aspiring businesswoman has reportedly been charged with extremism for accusing judges of corruption in a series of Russian folk songs posted online.

Natalia Kovaleva, 42, took to YouTube this spring when a judge ruled against her in a lawsuit that she had brought against the Sberbank state lender after [falling victim](#) to wire fraud in 2013.

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Investigators suspect Kovaleva of offending “the judiciary” social group with her traditional Russian limericks known as *chastushki*, Interfax [reported](#) Tuesday.

“The Saratov court is corrupt,” Kovaleva is heard [singing](#) in one of the videos on her YouTube channel. She accuses Sberbank of money laundering and the Saratov court of covering up its alleged activities.

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According to the Mediazona news website, investigators had [opened](#) the extremism case after a complaint filed by the chairman of Saratov’s judicial council. Kovaleva’s videos, the complaint alleged, “besmirched the honor and dignity of Saratov region judges.”

Kovaleva told Interfax that the authorities had raided her home and seized electronic devices.

“Chastushki are my way of addressing the competent authorities, reporting corruption, lawlessness and judicial crimes,” Interfax quoted Kovaleva as saying.

In an interview to Mediazona, Kovaleva [said](#) the extremism charge came as a surprise, adding that she considered herself to be "completely apolitical."

“What extremism? I’m a peaceful independent artist,” she said.

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