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20K People Donate to Russian Liberal Outlet to Pay Government Fine

November 13, 2018



Yevgenia Albats / The New Times

A liberal-leaning Russian media outlet has crowdsourced the funds it needs to pay off a crippling government fine in just four days, its editor announced on Tuesday.

A Moscow court fined The New Times 22 million rubles ($329,000) on Oct. 25 for failing to inform a state media watchdog about its foreign funding in 2017. A lawyer for the publication was cited by the RBC news website as saying that the fine would force the outlet to shut down as it was equal to its entire earnings over the past year. The outlet shut down its print edition in 2017 over financial problems.

Related article: Russian Magazine The New Times Closes Print Amid Financial Troubles

To help it pay "the biggest fine in the history of Russian media," The New Times launched a crowdfunding initiative on Nov. 7.

Just four days later, chief editor Yevgenia Albats announced on Twitter that the outlet had beat its target and raised a total of 25.4 million rubles.

“We did it!!!!! We can! Thanks to all!!!!!” she tweeted.

More than 20,000 individuals sent donations to The New Times during the crowdfunding campaign, Albats told The Moscow Times. The average payment, she said, was between 500 and 1,000 rubles.

Businessmen and politicians were among those who reportedly donated, including entrepreneur Yevgeny Chichvarkin, who said he gave 1 million rubles, and opposition politician Alexei Navalny, who said he sent 15,500 rubles.

Meanwhile, lawyers for The New Times have appealed the government fine, the investigative Novaya Gazeta newspaper reported. A court is scheduled to hear the appeal on Nov. 20.

“Western media unfortunately wrote us off too quickly,” Albats told The Moscow Times on Tuesday after the announcement.

“Russian liberals are alive and battling,” she added.

Evan Gershkovich contributed reporting.

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