

Former Head of Russian Railways Sues Novaya Gazeta for Libel

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Vladimir Yakunin / Kremlin.ru

The former head of Russian Railways, Vladimir Yakunin, is demanding millions of rubles in compensation from the investigative newspaper Novaya Gazeta for allegedly damaging his reputation, the RBC outlet cites his spokesman as saying.

Yakunin headed the state railway company for more than a decade before abruptly resigning in 2015. He has been the regular target of corruption claims, fueled by investigations by opposition politician Alexei Navalny.

Yakunin is now seeking 5 million rubles (\$76,000) in damages from Novaya Gazeta and two of its journalists for reports linking him and his relatives to a high-profile corruption case and, last month, the assassination of a senior investigator outside her home.

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Yakunin's spokesman Grigory Levchenko at the time said the journalists had "crossed a red line," demanding a retraction and an apology, the RBC news site reported.

"The only purpose of this claim is to protect [Yakunin's] good name and reputation," Levchenko told RBC after announcing the lawsuit against Novaya Gazeta on Friday. "Lawyers have concluded that the two Novaya Gazeta articles contain untrue and offensive information."

Levchenko said the compensation would be spent on "supporting professional journalism" and children's charities.

Novaya Gazeta's chief editor Sergei Kozheurov told RBC he had not been informed about the lawsuit.

RBC itself lost a libel suit to the head of Rosneft Igor Sechin in 2016, after the paper reported he had asked the Russian government to protect his company from its minority shareholder, BP. The article was later retracted.

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