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Russia Doles Out First 'Fake News' Fine Over Moscow Protest Interviews

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Andrei Lyubimov / Moskva News Agency

A Moscow court on Tuesday handed down Russia's first fine for spreading "fake news" against an online media outlet over its interviews about this summer's Moscow opposition rallies.

President Vladimir Putin signed legislation into law this year that fines online media for spreading "fake news." Observers warned that the "fake news" and "disrespect for authority" laws that Putin signed in tandem amount to censorship, a claim that the Kremlin denied.

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A magistrates court fined the Moment Istiny outlet 200,000 rubles ($3,100) and its editor-in-chief Yevgeny Gneushov an additional 60,000 rubles ($930), Interfax cited the court's spokeswoman as saying.

Authorities deemed the online publication's YouTube interviews posted in August to be "actions aimed at stirring up the public masses and thereby harming public interests," Moment Istiny's lawyer Fyodor Trusov said. The interviews had centered on this summer's mass opposition rallies in Moscow.

Trusov called the verdict a "violation of free speech" and said the outlet plans to appeal the decision.

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