

Russian Official Walks Back Call to ‘Wipe Out’ Critical Journalists

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The number of attacks and threats on Russian journalists by the authorities more than doubled between 2017-2019, the international Justice for Journalists NGO said. **Sergey Savostyanov / TASS**

A Russian official has apologized Monday for remarks suggesting that journalists should be “wiped out” for criticizing the authorities.

Mikhail Ignatyev, who heads Russia’s republic of Chuvashia 680 kilometers east of Moscow, made the controversial [remarks](#) Saturday at an event commemorating the local press.

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“They need to be wiped out, as the people say,” Ignatyev was quoted as saying about critical journalists, using a [phrase](#) President Vladimir Putin famously employed when referring to Chechen terrorists in 2000.

“Say where they came from, their intentions, where they live, where they work, what they

earn,” Ignatyev added Saturday.

The governor’s awkward turn of phrase comes at a sensitive time for media freedom in Russia.

The number of attacks and threats on Russian journalists by the authorities more than doubled between 2017-2019, the international Justice for Journalists NGO [said](#). Russia also [ranks](#) 149th out of 180 countries worldwide for press freedom, according to the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) international media watchdog.

Ignatyev later apologized for using the phrase and said his words had been “distorted,” according to a statement [published](#) on the regional administration’s website Monday.

“In fact, [the governor] was referring to people who call themselves journalists but pursue the sole goal of discrediting the government by any means,” the statement said.

“To those whose feelings were hurt by the phrase ‘wipe out,’ I — a person with a good soul — apologize,” Ignatyev said.

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