The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Popular Russian Stand-Up Comic Flees Russia After Police Probe

January 23, 2020



Alexander Dolgopolov opened his hour-long routine with a joke about Jesus and his mother Mary. Later, he mocks Putin's voters and Russia's presidential elections. **Screenshot / Stand-Up Club #1**

Update: Dolgopolov has fled Russia pending further information about the police probe, human rights lawyer Leonid Solovyov told the MBKh news website Thursday. "We can't say where he went yet," Solovyov said, citing security reasons.

Dolgopolov warned his Instagram followers that his late Wednesday performance in Moscow was canceled.

Police near Moscow have put out a request for information about a popular comic's stand-up performance from a year ago, the comic said Tuesday, prompting speculation that he could be targeted for jokes he made about religion and the authorities.

It was not immediately clear what prompted the Orekhovo-Zuevo police department to send the request to the St. Petersburg venue where Alexander Dolgopolov performed in February 2019. However, Russian media reported Wednesday that authorities sought to interrogate

Dolgopolov based on a viewer’s complaint that the comic insulted his religious feelings.

Embed:



Посмотреть эту публикацию в Instagram

Публикация от Александр Долгополов (@sankldive) 21 Янв 2020 в 1:29 PST

Russia criminalized the abuse of religious sensibilities in 2013 in what rights activists and analysts described as a return to the Dark Ages. Those found guilty risk up to three years of imprisonment.

“I don’t know what's happening. I’m scared, I’m angry, but I’m not surprised,” Dolgopolov said in an Instagram video Tuesday.

“I doubt that police wanted to find out where I live to take a selfie as fans,” he joked.

Dolgopolov’s act, which was uploaded on a popular Russian stand-up channel on YouTube, has gained more than 2.5 million views in nine months. He opens the hour-long routine with a joke about Jesus and his mother Mary. Later, Dolgopolov mocks Putin’s voters and Russia’s presidential elections.

After he broke the news of being targeted by the authorities, viewers also suggested that Dolgopolov may have insulted President Vladimir Putin. During the February act, the comic quips: “I’m not smart enough for subtleties when I talk about politics, like in the Soviet Union.”

The Orekhovo-Zuevo police department’s request follows a wave of prosecutions last year after Russia criminalized “blatant disrespect” toward the authorities. An overwhelming majority of criminal cases launched under the new law concerned disrespect toward Putin, analysis has shown.

“Putin must have watched my act and released his attack dogs to sniff out everything about me,” Dolgopolov said on Instagram.

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