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Leading Russian Paper Vedomosti's New Editor Bans Putin Criticism

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Writing pieces critical of the constitutional amendments that could allow Putin to remain president until 2036 is now allegedly a fireable offense at Vedomosti. **Kremlin.ru**

Update: An editorial has appeared on Vedomosti's website criticizing its acting editor-in-chief, Andrei Shmarov. The editorial warns that the paper risks becoming "another dependent and controlled media aiming to fulfill the interests and ambitions of its official and secret owners" unless they appoint a different chief editor. Earlier Thursday, the Kremlin denied involvement in the newspaper's editorial policy.

The new chief editor of Russia's leading business newspaper Vedomosti has banned employees from publishing articles that criticize President Vladimir Putin's proposed constitutional changes, the paper's media editor said Wednesday in the latest report of recent censorship at the publication.

Andrei Shmarov, who was named acting editor-in-chief by Vedomosti's new owners in March, made news earlier this month for deleting a column critical of state-controlled oil giant Rosneft's head, Igor Sechin.

Embed:

> Vedomosti's media editor Ksenia Boletskaya writes that the paper's new editor-in-chief Andrei Shmarov has banned publishing polls from the independent Levada Center and writing critically about Putin's proposed constitutional changes https://t.co/e8OD5Hhr6V
>
> — Evan Gershkovich (@evangershkovich) April 22, 2020

Shmarov has now threatened to fire staffers if they write pieces critical of the constitutional amendments that could allow Putin to remain president until 2036, Vedomosti's media editor Kseniya Boletskaya wrote on Facebook.

The new chief editor also banned articles that cite surveys from Russia's last remaining independent polling agency, the Levada Center, Boletskaya wrote, claiming that the orders came from the Kremlin.

"Shmarov says that the presidential administration doesn't want to see Levada surveys in Vedomosti and if the paper wants to survive, it should listen to the presidential administration," Boletskaya said.

Vedomosti, a longtime partner of the Levada Center, often gets first access to the pollster's latest studies.

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"He's already tried to talk Vedomosti journalists out of using Levada," she wrote. "Now it's a direct ban. And strictly verbal."

Shmarov previously founded the Kremlin-linked Expert magazine and served as CEO of the Snob news website and editor-in-chief of the Project 42 educational portal. His hiring sparked backlash within Vedomosti's ranks, and several of its editors have called on the owners to appoint a different chief editor.

Derk Sauer, Vedomosti's founder and the publisher of The Moscow Times, has expressed concern about the independent paper's sale to publisher Konstantin Zyatkov and businessman Alexei Golubovich, which led to Shmarov's hiring.

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