

Sexual Harassment Claims Plague Liberal Radio Station Chief: BBC Russia

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Alexei Venediktov, 64, has a reputation of being a womanizer that's an open secret within Russia's liberal media circles. **Sophia Sandurskaya / Moskva News Agency**

Update: Venediktov [apologized](#) to Veduta for causing her trauma but continued to deny the allegations of wrongdoing.

"Anya's accusations against me did not take place. However, I apologize once again if this stayed in her mind. If she's suffering, please don't suffer," Venediktov said on air Wednesday evening.

Two women have accused Alexei Venediktov, the head of Russia's liberal radio station Ekho Moskvy, of sexual harassment, according to an extensive profile of the editor [published](#) by BBC Russia on Wednesday.

Venediktov, 64, has developed a [reputation](#) of being a womanizer that's an open secret within Russia's liberal media circles. In a 2005 interview with GQ Russia, Venediktov [said](#) that harassment was a "right" at Ekho Moskvy's offices.

Related article: [Russian Lawmaker Wants Female Journalists Barred From State Duma After Sexual Harassment Complaints](#)

Venediktov made unwanted advances toward Anna Veduta, opposition figure Alexei Navalny's former spokeswoman, after a company dinner in 2012, Veduta told BBC Russia. Veduta, who was in her early 20s at the time, said Venediktov touched her knees against her will inside his car and tried to kiss her outside her home.

"I clung to the seat, shrunk away and said 'No,'" she said.

"I was very ashamed: I had agreed to come to dinner, so I was to blame for what happened," Veduta was quoted as saying. "[Besides,] I really didn't want my foolishness to negatively affect Navalny's relationship with Ekho."

A young social activist whose name was withheld by BBC Russia recounted a similar experience with Venediktov at an August 2017 company dinner.

"We were sitting tightly at the table, I had nowhere to go. Venediktov first started holding my shoulder as if by accident," the anonymous woman was quoted as saying.

"He put his hand on my knee, then his hand moved higher along the inside of my thigh," she said.

Venediktov denied harassing Veduta and dismissed the anonymous account as an attempt to "profit publicly off my name."

Following the publication of BBC Russia's profile, Navalny said he was unaware of the incident involving Veduta, [tweeting](#) his "deep support" for her Wednesday.

"I believe that Alexei Venediktov should apologize regardless of his attitude toward the situation," Navalny said.

Venediktov apparently stopped relishing his image as an "alcoholic and womanizer" after a slew of sexual harassment accusations against his friend and federal lawmaker Leonid Slutsky emerged in 2018, BBC Russia reported.

Ekho Moskvyy was among half a dozen news outlets that [boycotted](#) Russia's lower house of parliament after its ethics commission dismissed the accusations against Slutsky.

"I had met him [Slutsky] at a Foreign Ministry reception and told him 'You're an a--hole'," BBC Russia quoted Venediktov as saying.

"You should have said: 'Even if you imagined it [the sexual harassment accusations], I apologize.' Instead, you're starting to scoff. I won't talk to you until you apologize."

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