The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Azerbaijan Organizers Ban Russian Journalist from Euro 2020

By AFP

June 09, 2021



Azerbaijan's move to block Nobel Arustamyan's accreditation sparked outrage among Russian journalists and elicited a protest from his channel. **nobel_arustamyan / Instagram**

A Russian journalist has been banned from covering football's European Championship by Azerbaijan's organizing committee over his visits to the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh, sparking outrage in Moscow on Wednesday.

Nobel Arustamyan, a journalist with Armenian ancestry working for the Russian Match TV station, said Tuesday that Azerbaijan's organizing committee has denied him accreditation for Euro 2020 that is being organized in 11 European cities including the Azerbaijani capital, Baku.

The approval of the 11 national organizing committees is necessary for journalists to be accredited.

The oil-rich country on the Caspian Sea is set to host three group games in June — Wales v Switzerland, Turkey v Wales, Switzerland v Turkey — and a quarter-final in July.

The vice president of the Azerbaijani Football Federation, Elkhan Mammadov, confirmed his country was behind the refusal.

"This person has repeatedly visited the occupied lands of Azerbaijan for many years and during these visits did not receive permission from the relevant structures of Azerbaijan," Mammadov told journalists.

"He violated the laws of our country, showing disrespect for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan."

Azerbaijan's Armenian-populated breakaway region of Karabakh was last year at the center of a six-week war between the arch-foe neighbors.

The war has claimed the lives of some 6,000 people and ended in November with a Russian-brokered ceasefire that saw Armenia cede swathes of territories it had controlled for decades.

Azerbaijan's move to block Arustamyan's accreditation sparked outrage among Russian journalists and elicited a protest from his channel.

"The refusal of a regional federation to approve the name of our commentator is a violation of the spirit of the international sports movement," the general producer of Match TV, Tina Kandelaki, wrote on her Telegram channel.

Sports journalist Vasili Utkin denounced "a bestial injustice."

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the ministry had "worked all night" with UEFA to ensure Aroustamyan is allowed "to exercise his professional activities."

"I believe a solution will be found," she added.

Azerbaijani laws prohibit the entry into its territory of those who have visited Nagorno-Karabakh without permission from Baku.

In 2019, Armenian midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan missed, for security reasons, the Europa League final between his then team Arsenal and Chelsea that was played in Baku.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/06/09/azerbaijan-organizers-ban-russian-journalist-from-euro-2020-a74168