

BBC Attacks Russia's Shock Move to Expel Journalist

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BBC Moscow Correspondent Sarah Rainsford, reporting earlier this year from the Geneva summit between U.S. President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin. [Twitter.com/sarahrainsford](https://twitter.com/sarahrainsford)

The BBC blasted Russian authorities Friday for their shock move to expel veteran correspondent Sarah Rainsford from the country.

The news organization called the move a “direct assault on media freedom,” and said it was urging Russia to “reconsider” its decision.

Authorities in Moscow said they would not extend Rainsford’s visa when it expires at the end of August and she should leave the country before then, according to a report on the state-run Rossiya 24 TV channel aired late Thursday.

Russian officials said the expulsion was retaliation for the U.K.’s decision to deny a visa to an unnamed Russian correspondent in Britain.

“The expulsion of Sarah Rainsford is a direct assault on media freedom which we condemn

unreservedly,” Tim Davie, BBC Director General said in a [statement](#).

“Sarah is an exceptional and fearless journalist. She is a fluent Russian speaker who provides independent and in-depth reporting of Russia and the former Soviet Union. We urge the Russian authorities to reconsider their decision,” he added.

Several journalists [rallied](#) to Rainsford’s defence Friday after reports of her expulsion were first reported.

Although Moscow frequently criticises Western media for their reporting on Russia, it rarely expels journalists.

Rainsford’s expulsion comes amid [criticisms](#) that the Kremlin is ramping up efforts to silence domestic independent media with anti-free speech laws, “foreign agent” and “undesirable organization” labels and raids on journalists’ homes.

Russia’s Foreign Ministry announced this week that it barred entry to unidentified British officials in retaliation to London’s human rights and anti-corruption sanctions.

AFP contributed reporting.

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