

Russia Arrests Opposition Journalist in Absentia for Mariupol Hospital Bombing 'Fakes'

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Alexander Nevzorov. [LoloxI9 \(CC BY-SA 4.0\)](#)

A prominent Russian opposition journalist has been arrested in absentia on charges of publishing "fake" news about the Russian military's air strike on a maternity hospital in southern Ukraine, [Interfax reported](#) Friday.

Alexander Nevzorov, a former MP who has worked with independent media outlets like Dozhd and Ekho Moskvy, is one of the dozens of Russians charged under Russia's new law that criminalizes "fakes" about the Armed Forces.

Moscow's Basmanny District Court sentenced him to two months of arrest in absentia for distributing "deliberately false" information about Russia's March 9 shelling of a Mariupol maternity hospital on social media.

Nevzorov's posts, which criticized the Russian military for the strike, "were accompanied by

unreliable photographs of civilians affected by the shelling," Russia's Investigative Committee [said](#) in March.

Russian officials both dismissed the attack as being staged by Ukraine and justified it by claiming the hospital was being used by extremist Ukrainian forces and that all medical personnel and patients had long been gone.

Officials also baselessly described the pregnant women pictured fleeing the shelling as crisis actors.

Related article: [Siberian Journalists Face Prison for 'Fake' War Reporting](#)

The law against "fakes" about the Armed Forces, passed just days after Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, punishes those found guilty with up to 10 or 15 years in prison.

Critics say the law is being used to silence anti-war voices and reporting that doesn't follow the Kremlin's narrative about what it calls a "special military operation."

Nevzorov has described the accusations against him as "ridiculous" in a Telegram post, and urged security forces to look at themselves before accusing him of committing crimes.

In a March interview, he [said](#) the case against him was intended to signal to journalists in Russia that "the regime is not going to spare anyone, and that any attempts to comprehend the criminal war will end in prison."

Russian authorities have carried out an unprecedented crackdown on independent and critical voices since the start of the invasion on Feb. 24.

Hundreds of journalists are believed to have fled Russia since Moscow launched its "special military operation," and virtually every independent outlet has been blocked or closed down.

Nevzorov was also labeled a "foreign agent" on April 22, a designation that subjects those labeled to stifling bureaucratic requirements.

AFP contributed reporting.

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