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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Nobel Laureate Sells Medal for $103.5M to Benefit Ukraine Kids

By Maggy Donaldson for AFP

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Nobel Peace Prize winner Dmitry Muratov from Russia speaks during the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony at Oslo City Hall, Norway, Friday, Dec. 10, 2021. **AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko/TASS**

Dmitry Muratov, the Russian editor-in-chief of the independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta, on Monday auctioned off his Nobel Peace Prize gold medal for $103.5 million to benefit children displaced by the war in Ukraine.

The medal was sold to an as yet unidentified phone bidder at the sale in New York organized by Heritage Auctions.

The sale was a spirited one, with lots of applause and bidders egging one another on to increase the total. Muratov was seen recording videos of the bidding screen and those in the room.

When the final bid came in, at tens of millions of dollars more than the previous offer, many

in the room expressed shock, including Muratov himself.

"I'm just like you in that regard," he told AFP, speaking through a translator after the sale.

Muratov won the prize in 2021 alongside journalist Maria Ressa of the Philippines, with the committee honoring the pair "for their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression."

He was among a group of journalists who founded Novaya Gazeta in 1993 after the fall of the Soviet Union.

This year, it became the only major newspaper left voicing criticism of President Vladimir Putin and his tactics inside and outside the country.

In March, more than a month into Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Novaya Gazeta suspended operations in Russia, after Moscow adopted legislation providing for tough jail terms against anyone criticizing the Kremlin's bloody military campaign.

In April, Muratov was assaulted on a train when a person threw oil-based paint mixed with acetone on him, causing his eyes to burn.

Muratov's medal was available to bidders both in person and online, with all proceeds going to UNICEF's Humanitarian Response for Ukrainian Children Displaced by War.

When asked why he chose UNICEF as the recipient of the funds, Muratov said: "It's critical to us that that organization does not belong to any government. It can work above government. There are no borders for it."

Embed:

> Дмитрий Муратов продал свою Нобелевскую медаль на аукционе в США за 103,5 миллиона долларов.
>
> Журналист пообещал перечислить деньги ЮНИСЕФ, который направит их в страны, «где есть беженцы и дети беженцев из Украины»
>
> Видео: Novaya Gazeta. Europehttps://t.co/yspD1N2VwD pic.twitter.com/mpKeHusLJ5
>
> — TJ (@tjournal) June 21, 2022

Since 2000, six of Novaya Gazeta's journalists and collaborators have been killed in connection with their work, including investigative reporter Anna Politkovskaya.

Muratov dedicated his Nobel prize to their memory.

On Monday, he hailed the persistence of journalists as an important check on governments,

and one way that war can be prevented.

"So no matter how many times each one of us wants to turn in our notice and quit, we must stay in our jobs," he told AFP.

Speaking in a video released by Heritage in connection with the sale, the prominent journalist said that winning the Nobel "gives you an opportunity to be heard."

"The most important message today is for people to understand that there's a war going on and we need to help people who are suffering the most," he said.

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