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Russian Journalists Raided Over Alleged Ties to Pro-Ukraine Former Lawmaker

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Ilya Ponomaryov **Zuma / TASS**

Several Russian journalists in at least six regions had their homes searched by police Thursday, with state media citing their alleged ties to a pro-Ukraine former lawmaker and a legion of Russian soldiers fighting alongside Kyiv's forces.

The raids come amid Russia's sweeping crackdown on dissent and independent media since the start of its invasion of Ukraine in February.

Several journalists were reportedly raided in Moscow and the Moscow region as well as in the Oryol and Tyumen regions of western Siberia.

Police in the Urals city of Yekaterinburg raided the home of Vladislav Postnikov, editor-in-chief of the local Vecherniy Vedomosti outlet, while police in the southern city of Rostov-on-Don searched the home of journalist Bella Nasibyan.

The state-run RIA Novosti news agency said, citing unnamed sources, that some of the

journalists are allegedly linked to the Utro Fevralya (February Morning) Telegram and YouTube channels which are owned by ex-lawmaker Ilya Ponomaryov, a vocal opponent of the invasion of Ukraine.

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Last week, Ponomaryov, who now lives in Kyiv, was arrested in absentia on accusations of spreading "false information" about the Russian army — a crime introduced shortly after the Kremlin sent troops into its pro-Western neighbor.

He faces up to 10 years in prison in Russia.

Utro Fevralya denied the reports that it had ties to the raided journalists and accused Russian authorities of purging independent journalism in the regions under the pretext of fighting "fake news" about the military.

The lawmaker had recently claimed without evidence that he was in contact with Russian partisans who he said planted the car bomb that killed Daria Dugina, the adult daughter of nationalist ideologue and Ukraine war supporter Alexander Dugin. Moscow has accused Kyiv of carrying out the August attack.

RIA Novosti said the police raids in Moscow were also carried out in connection to the Freedom of Russia Legion — a paramilitary unit in Ukraine believed to have been formed by Russian soldiers who defected and pledged their allegiance to Kyiv.

Both the Russian Legion and Ponomaryov called the reports "fake."

Ponomaryov, 47, had been the only Russian deputy to vote against the 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and left Russia that year. The ex-lawmaker is a vocal critic of the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine.

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