The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Names War Supporters to Russia's Human Rights Council

November 17, 2022

Alexander Kots **Alexander Kots / facebook**

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday named several supporters of the war in Ukraine to the presidential Human Rights Council in a shake-up of the body which appeared to purge members who have publicly expressed doubts about the war.

War correspondent Alexander Kots and two other prominent supporters of the war were added to the council, while 10 members, including the well-known television host Nikolai Svanidze, found themselves removed from the body.

Kots, a journalist for the Komsomolskaya Pravda tabloid who also runs the popular Telegram channel Kotsnews, has risen to prominence during Russia's invasion of Ukraine as he has been embedded with Russian forces throughout the war.

While he has reported on Ukraine since 2014, he has faced repeated accusations of being a mouthpiece for the Kremlin since the start of Russia's 2022 invasion, most notably for his claim that the massacre of Ukrainian civilians in the town of Bucha was staged by Kyiv.

Also added to the body on Thursday were Yulia Belekhova of the All-Russian People's Front, an organization that raises money to support pro-Kremlin separatist forces in Ukraine's Donbas region, as well as Elena Shishkina, a member of the Free Donbas party in the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic.

The 10 members removed from the body include Svanidze, who has increasingly voiced his concerns over Russia's invasion and who called for curbs on the death penalty in the Donetsk region in an open letter to Putin in August.

Prominent rights activist Igor Kalyapin and leading anti-xenophobia researcher Alexander Verkhovsky were also removed from the council in Thursday's shake-up.

Russia's Human Rights Council, which was established by presidential decree in 2004 to guarantee and protect human rights in Russia, has been criticized for failing to challenge Putin as members have been ousted and replaced with more Kremlin-friendly figures over the years.

The council has been chaired by journalist and war supporter Valery Fadeyev since 2019.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/11/17/putin-names-war-supporters-to-russias-human-rights-council-a79409