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Crimean Teacher Jailed for Posting Patriotic Ukrainian Song

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Andrei Belozerov. **Andrei Belozerov / VK**

A former teacher in annexed Crimea has said he was beaten and jailed for posting a patriotic Ukrainian song that has become a symbol of Kyiv's resistance to Russia's invasion, independent Russian media reported Tuesday.

Andrei Belozerov said security officers in the annexed peninsula's second-largest city of Simferopol barged into his dormitory and violently arrested him on the morning of Oct. 28.

"They put me face down on the floor, [...] handcuffed me and started kicking me in the kidneys, stomach and chest," Belozerov told the Kholod news website, adding that he was also struck and stepped on in the face.

A local court sentenced Belozerov to 14 days of detention on misdemeanor charges of "promoting extremist symbols" for posting the song "Chervona Kalyna" on social media and resisting arrest, according to Kholod.

Related article: Crimea Wedding Party Arrested, Fined For Playing Ukrainian Patriotic Song

“Chervona Kalyna” has become an anthem of Ukrainian resistance since Russian troops invaded in February. One of its many renditions calls for Ukraine to be freed from “Muscovite shackles.”

Belozerov was previously fired from college and handed 13 days of arrest in September for watching a video with students that featured another Ukrainian song and Turkish-made Bayraktar drones that proved effective in the military campaign.

Also that month, six people were arrested and fined for playing “Chervona Kalyna” at a wedding reception on the Black Sea peninsula.

In October, the winner of this year’s Miss Crimea beauty pageant and her friend were fined for singing “Chervona Kalyna” in an Instagram video.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 — a move widely unrecognized by the international community — following protests that ousted Ukraine's Kremlin-friendly president.

With Ukrainian forces approaching the peninsula amid its battlefield gains in the neighboring Kherson region, Crimea’s Kremlin-appointed Governor Sergei Aksyonov has warned residents against “chanting pro-Ukrainian slogans” and “singing nationalist songs.”

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