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Russian Social Network Bans Soldiers' Mothers' Group Following Putin Criticism

November 28, 2022



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Popular Russian social network VKontakte has banned an independent group of soldiers' relatives lobbying the Kremlin for the return of mobilized troops from Ukraine.

The Council of Wives and Mothers said Sunday that its page had been blocked at the request of the Russian Prosecutor General's Office without further explanation.

The group's ban came after it accused the Kremlin of excluding its members from President Vladimir Putin's meeting with the mothers of soldiers Friday.

The council, which appeared after Putin declared a "partial" mobilization of reserves in September, claims to represent draftees' relatives from 89 Russian cities.

Media outlets link its origins to a fringe political movement that seeks a return to Soviet rule and has protested Covid-19 restrictions during the pandemic.

Related article: Putin Meets With Carefully Selected Group of Soldiers' Mothers

In its last post before being blocked, the mothers' council acknowledged links to the group, the National Union of Russia's Revival, but denied accusations that it refuses to recognize Russian law.

Members of the Council of Wives and Mothers in mid-November protested outside the Western Military District headquarters, demanding the return of mobilized soldiers from the front lines and peace negotiations with Ukraine.

The group adopted a resolution expressing distrust toward Russian authorities who "dragged our country into a bloody armed conflict" and "disintegrated the Russian army," according to the Siberia-based Taiga.info news website, which said it had obtained the text.

VKontakte is run by Vladimir Kiriyenko, the son of the presidential administration's first deputy chief of staff Sergei Kiriyenko.

Sergei Kiriyenko is one of the most influential figures in Russian politics with sweeping control over the country's domestic policy.

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