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Russian Director of ISIS Brides Play Given 2 Months Pre-Trial Detention

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Theater director Yevgeniya Berkovich at the "Made in Russia" anniversary awards ceremony in 2021.
Denis Grishkin / Moskva News Agency

Updates with Berkovich being remanded in custody.

A Moscow court ordered the director of an award-winning play about Russian Islamic State brides to be remanded in custody for two months on Friday, a day after she was arrested for allegedly "justifying terrorism," Interfax reported.

Lawyers representing Yevgeniya (Zhenya) Berkovich had requested the court place their client under house arrest or release her on bail, pointing out that she was responsible for looking after young children will health problems.

Berkovich's mother, activist Yelena Efros, said Thursday that a criminal case had been opened in connection with the play, "Finist the Brave Falcon," which tells the stories of real Russian women who arranged online marriages with members of the Islamic State terrorist group and attempted to join their husbands in Syria.

Berkovich was detained in Moscow on Thursday and was interrogated by Investigative Committee officers, the OVD-Info rights project reported.

Her lawyer Yulia Tregubova later confirmed to OVD-Info that the director was under arrest as a suspect in the case.

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Police carried out searches at Efros' house and at the St. Petersburg apartment of Berkovich's 88-year-old grandmother, writer Nina Katerli.

"I don't know how the search in my house is connected with a play that is on in Moscow. My granddaughter lives there and rarely visits [me]," the St. Petersburg-based news website Fontanka cited Katerli as saying.

The play's author Svetlana Petriychuk was also detained at Moscow's Vnukovo Airport, according to OVD-Info. She was later released after being questioned as a suspect.

"Finist the Brave Falkon" was awarded two Golden Mask awards, Russia's most prestigious theater prize, for best playwright and best costume design in 2022.

The play has been performed by Berkovich's Moscow-based independent theater company Docheri Soso.

The Islamic State is on Russia's registry of banned terrorist and extremist organizations.

Charges of "justifying terrorism" are punishable by up to seven years in prison.

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