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Russia Jails State TV Protester 8.5 Years in Absentia

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Marina Ovsyannikova. **Marina Ovsyannikova / Instagram**

A Russian court sentenced Marina Ovsyannikova, the former state journalist who on live television protested the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine, to eight-and-a-half years in prison in absentia, media reported Wednesday.

Moscow's Basmanny District Court convicted Ovsyannikova, who is currently living outside of Russia, of spreading "false information" about the Russian army over her anti-war picket near the Kremlin in July 2022.

According to the independent news outlet Sota, the court also banned Ovsyannikova from running websites and social media accounts for four years.

Ovsyannikova became well-known in Russia and abroad for holding up an anti-war sign during a March 2022 primetime news show on state broadcaster Channel One, where she was employed as a producer at the time.

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Authorities in August 2022 placed Ovysannikova under house arrest for spreading "false information" about the Russian Armed Forces after she held up a poster near the Kremlin reading: "How many more children must die [in Ukraine] before you stop?"

She has since fled the country and was placed on Russia's federal wanted list. Russian broadcaster RTVI reports that Ovsyannikova is currently in France.

The former state TV journalist denounced the court ruling as "absurd and politically motivated" on the messaging app Telegram, saying "I do not renounce any of my words."

Before Wednesday's ruling, prosecutors had requested the court to sentence Ovsyannikova to nine-and-a-half years in prison for "fanning social tensions."

The charges of spreading "fake news" about the Russian military carry a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison.

Ovsyannikova had been fined three times under a wartime misdemeanor of "discrediting" the Russian army.

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