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Russia Charges Ex-Lawyer Novikov for Fighting With Ukraine Army

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Ilya Novikov. **Ilya Novikov / Instagram**

Russia has charged prominent Russian lawyer Ilya Novikov in absentia for joining the Ukrainian military, the Federal Security Service (FSB) said Monday.

Novikov left Russia after the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine and joined the Ukrainian territorial defense forces, according to the FSB's statement.

It said that Novikov "underwent military training, participates in combat operations and is engaged in propaganda work."

The former lawyer was charged with high treason, which is punishable by up to life in prison under changes signed into law by President Vladimir Putin earlier this year.

Novikov reacted to the criminal case against him with an expletive-laden message on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter), telling Russian authorities "Go f*** yourselves."

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The FSB announced the charges 11 months after the Interior Ministry placed Novikov on its wanted list on unspecified accusations.

Russia's Justice Ministry labeled Novikov a "foreign agent" in November 2022.

The Moscow Bar Association disbarred him this summer for "violating the professional code of ethics."

Novikov gained popularity as a regular contestant on the long-running game show "Chto? Gde? Kogda?" ("What? Where? When?") between 2002 and 2016.

As a lawyer, he represented Ukrainian army pilot Nadezhda Savchenko, who was accused of complicity in the murder of two Russian journalists in 2014. He also represented 24 Ukrainian sailors captured by the Russian Navy in 2018.

Novikov was part of legal teams that had fought court-ordered closures of Russia's oldest human rights watchdog Memorial and jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation.

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