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Russian Publisher Raided for Selling Books By Renowned Writer on 'Extremists and Terrorists' List

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Boris Akunin presents his book "History of the Russian State. Part of Europe" in 2013. **Mikhail Pochuev / TASS**

Russian investigators raided the Zakharov publishing house Tuesday after it refused to stop selling books by Russian-Georgian writer Boris Akunin, who this week was added to the country's "extremists and terrorists" registry.

"The Investigative Committee wants all the documents we possess — contracts, payments, everything — linked to Boris Akunin," Irina Bogat, the publishing house's director, told The Moscow Times.

"We're the only publishing house that hasn't issued a statement or announced the removal of his books from our website."

Akunin, whose real name is Grigory Chkhartishvili, was added to state financial watchdog Rosfinmonitoring's list of "extremists and terrorists" on Monday.

Only one employee was at the publishing house's office at the time of the raid, Bogat told The Moscow Times. When the employee asked to take a photo of the search warrant, she was not permitted to do so and her phone was confiscated, Bogat said.

Akunin, 67, lives in the U.K. He has publicly condemned the Kremlin's war against Ukraine and is a co-founder of the TrueRussia Foundation, which helps people affected by the invasion.

Russia's Investigative Committee said Monday it had opened a criminal case against Akunin on charges of "justifying terrorism" and spreading "fake news" about the Russian military.

Related article: Russia Adds Prominent Writer Akunin to 'Extremists and Terrorists' Registry

The prominent publishing house AST halted the printing and sale of Akunin's books, as did popular booksellers Molodaya Gvardiya, Chitay Gorod and Bukvoed.

Bogat said Zakharov's staff intentionally chose to continue selling Akunin's books.

"There's a legal conflict. He was added to the ['extremists and terrorists'] list, but his books do not contain any extremism or terrorism, so they're permissible for sale. We expected [pressure], but we did not expect it to be so lightning fast," Bogat said.

Akunin, the most popular writer in Russia in 2021, is known for his series about imperial Russia which has been translated into many languages and adapted into television series.

He warned of further pressure from the state following the raid on Zakharov.

"I think this is just the beginning. They will probably come to other publishing houses that have published my books. To numerous theaters that staged performances. To the bookstores that sold my books. To libraries," Akunin said on his Facebook page.

He added with irony that he "worried" about pro-government actors and public figures who once played roles in productions based on his books.

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