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Perm City Lawmaker Flees Russia After Criticizing Putin, Ukraine Invasion

By Moscow Times Reporter

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Sergei Medvedev. **Sergei Medvedev / VK**

A city lawmaker in the Russian city of Perm has fled the country after being expelled from the Communist Party over an online post where he criticized the invasion of Ukraine and President Vladimir Putin, the politician told The Moscow Times on Thursday.

Sergei Medvedev said he faced backlash from inside his party and from Russian pro-war groups after he shared a post on the social media network VKontakte that was critical of Moscow's decision to invade its neighbor.

"I want the war to end! I want to see Russia free from Putin's shackles," read the post, which was published in December.

“May cruel punishment befall all those responsible for hundreds of thousands of ruined lives," it continued, adding: "It's scary to see what Russia has become.”

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Russian media, citing anonymous sources, reported this week that authorities placed Medvedev on its wanted list, however, there was no official confirmation as to whether criminal charges were pressed against him.

Russia's Communist Party expelled Medvedev last week after the Perm City Duma and law enforcement agencies sent a request to the party asking to "give a legal assessment" of Medvedev's social media posts where he criticized the war.

Medvedev told The Moscow Times that he left Russia due to fears of legal punishment and moved to "a safe location," adding that he had no regrets about publically taking a stance against the invasion of Ukraine.

"I did everything that a citizen has to do," the politician from Perm, a city some 1,150 kilometers east of Moscow, explained in a phone interview. "I said that there is a war going on and I condemned it. How can it be otherwise?"

"I couldn't remain silent," he added.

Shortly after invading Ukraine in February 2022, Russia made it illegal to publically criticize the war or spread so-called "fakes" about what the Kremlin insists on calling a "special military operation."

Since the start of the war, Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, has opened 81 criminal cases for "discrediting" the Russian Armed Forces, as well as more than 270 criminal cases for spreading "fakes" about the war.

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