

Russia Arrests Head of Uzbek Diaspora Over Wartime Meme

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Usman Baratov in court. t.me/skmoscowgsu

Russia has placed the head of an Uzbek diaspora association in pre-trial detention for “inciting hatred” with a meme that spoofed the country's economic inflation and mobilization for the war in Ukraine, authorities [said](#) Friday.

Usman Baratov was [accused](#) of “mocking” Russian soldiers on social media. Russian Investigative Committee chief Alexander Bastrykin said he ordered a criminal case against Baratov on request from Russian war correspondents.

The war correspondents said they were [offended](#) by an image posted on Baratov’s page on the social network Odnoklassniki in December of a hen in a coop with the caption:

“Screw you and your eggs! Bring back the roosters from the front.”

The meme addresses the [rising cost of eggs](#), which prompted a personal apology from President Vladimir Putin last month, as well as the [growing chorus of family members](#) calling

for the return of mobilized soldiers from Ukraine.

Baratov faces up to six years in prison if found guilty of “inciting hatred, which amounts to humiliation of human dignity.”

Baratov denied his guilt, claiming that his Odnoklassniki account was hacked.

On Friday, the Investigative Committee announced that the Zamoskvoretsky District Court ruled to place Baratov into pre-trial custody.

Baratov heads the interregional Uzbek association called “[Vatandosh](#).”

Russia has cracked down on virtually all forms of public criticism of the war in Ukraine since launching its invasion nearly two years ago, forcing thousands out of the country and landing many dissidents in jail.

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