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Anti-War Science Journalist Flees Russia After 'Wave of Hate'

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Asya Kazantseva. **Okras (CC BY-SA 4.0)**

Russian science journalist Asya Kazantseva announced Monday she has fled Russia following a "wave of hate" from pro-war groups and government officials over her anti-war views.

Kazantseva is the latest high-profile figure forced into exile amid an intensifying crackdown on the few Kremlin critics who have remained in the country since Russian troops invaded Ukraine in early 2022.

Kazantseva, 37, said her decision to leave the country was based on efforts by authorities to "cleanse the media landscape from disloyal elements" ahead of the March 2024 presidential elections in which Vladimir Putin is seeking his fifth term in office.

"They probably want to simply discredit me, scare me and drive me out of the country," Kazantseva wrote on Facebook.

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In December, two bookstores in Moscow and the city of Tver canceled Kazantseva's book presentations following what she described as "denunciations" from pro-war figures.

In Monday's Facebook post, Kazantseva wrote that the cancellations "made it problematic to earn a living."

Around the same time, lower-house State Duma deputy Andrei Lugovoy slammed Kazantseva as a "traitor" and published her past home addresses. Lugovoy has since deleted his post, while Kazantseva said she no longer lived at the addresses.

The Duma's ethics committee said it found no violations and argued that Lugovoy enjoys freedom of speech guaranteed under the Russian Constitution.

"A friendly lawyer said if they [Russian authorities] wanted to open a criminal case against me, they'd find something to prosecute me for," Kazantseva wrote.

Kazantseva said she has settled in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi "until better times."

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