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Moscow Court Arrests Writer Boris Akunin in Absentia

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Boris Akunin. **Dmitry Rozhkov (CC BY-SA 3.0)**

A Moscow court has ordered the arrest in absentia of popular exiled novelist Boris Akunin over his criticism of Russia's war against Ukraine, officials announced Tuesday.

Authorities charged Akunin, who has not lived in Russia since 2014, with justifying terrorism and spreading "fake news" about the Russian army. Russian law enforcement officials issued a warrant for his arrest last month.

Though he remains one of Russia's most widely read contemporary authors, Akunin's books have since been withdrawn from stores and publishing houses across the country, and theaters have canceled productions based on his works.

Moscow's Basmanny District Court ruled to place Akunin, 67, under arrest for two months if authorities manage to have him extradited to Russia.

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If found guilty, the writer faces up to seven years in prison on terrorism charges and up to 10 years on wartime charges of "fake news."

Russia's financial intelligence body Rosfinmonitoring has placed Akunin on its "terrorist and extremist" list, a designation that allows authorities to freeze his Russian bank accounts.

Last week, Russia's Justice Ministry added Akunin to its list of "foreign agents" under his real name Grigory Chkhartishvili.

Akunin, who has spoken out against Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its 2022 invasion of Ukraine, co-founded the "True Russia" platform that helps Ukrainian refugees and exiled anti-war Russians.

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