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Russia Jails Journalist for Criticizing Ukraine Offensive

By AFP

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Roman Ivanov. **SOTAvision**

A Russian court on Wednesday sentenced a journalist to seven years in prison for criticizing the Ukraine offensive in social media posts.

Roman Ivanov, 51, was found guilty of spreading "false information" about Russia's Armed Forces and punished under Moscow's strict military censorship laws.

Moscow has used laws against "discrediting" the Armed Forces or publishing "false information" to stamp out public criticism of its full-scale military offensive on Ukraine.

"Peace and freedom," Ivanov shouted as he left the courtroom after the sentence.

"We're with you. You are not alone," his applauding supporters shouted, AFP journalists at the courtroom saw.

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In social media posts published in 2022 on the Telegram and VKontake social media sites, Ivanov criticized Russia's military offensive in Ukraine and its actions in the Ukrainian city of Bucha.

He was arrested last year and pleaded not guilty in court.

In a final statement at a previous hearing he said: "Journalism no longer exists in Russia."

"We must ask ourselves why we are sowing suffering and unhappiness all around us, why our country has turned into an avalanche of suffering and unhappiness," he added.

Ivanov used to work for a local state-run TV channel but was fired in 2021 after reporting on alleged corruption, electoral fraud and ecological problems in Korolyov, a town northeast of Moscow.

Ivanov's wife, Maria Nekrasova, said Wednesday he had proved that his posts "contained no false information" and that he had "no motive for political hatred."

She said they plan to appeal the ruling.

Speaking outside the court after the verdict, Ivanov's family said they believed the case against him had been ordered by local authorities as retribution for his reporting.

"What's in front of him has been completely fabricated," his mother, Alla Ivanova, said.

"I will continue to fight," she added, speaking through tears.

"I love my son and I'm proud of him. I'm proud that he fought for people, helped people."

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