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Moscow Expels Spanish Journalist, Employer Says

By AFP

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Xavier Colas. **Xavier Colás / X**

Russia has expelled a journalist from the Spanish El Mundo daily after refusing to renew his work visa, the newspaper reported Thursday, calling it an attack on press freedom.

Xavier Colas, who had been reporting from Moscow for 12 years, was on Wednesday given 24 hours to leave Russia since he was unable to obtain a new visa, according to the newspaper.

He was notified of this decision by a Russian official, who threatened him with unspecified "problems" if he did not leave before his work visa expired, El Mundo wrote in a two-page article.

It said that in recent months Colas had been visited at his home by police officers who asked him to "stop covering demonstrations by the wives of Russian soldiers" which is "one of the few visible signs of discontent with the war" in Ukraine.

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"Refusal to renew a journalist's visa is one of the usual tools" used by the Russian authorities to "undermine freedom of expression," El Mundo added, criticizing the "threats" and "pressure" used against journalists working there.

Colas, who recently published a book in Spain about his years working in Russia, entitled "Putinistan," said he had "no regrets" in a message posted on X (formerly Twitter).

"I have simply done my job: I have told what is going on, I have spoken to the people who are suffering because of it and I have explained who is responsible for what is happening," he wrote.

The Russian authorities have adopted increasingly restrictive measures against Western journalists working in the country since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine two years ago, such as requiring them to renew work visas every three months.

Several foreign reporters have been forced to leave Russia by the authorities, while others have complained of being intimidated.

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