The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Newspaper Publisher in Siberia Jailed 8 Years Over War 'Fakes'

August 30, 2024



Sergei Mikhailov. **social media**

A court in Siberia's republic of Altai sentenced a newspaper publisher to eight years in prison for spreading "false information" about the Russian military, the internet rights group Setevye Svobody (Net Freedoms Project) said Friday.

Sergei Mikhailov, who ran the "Listok" weekly newspaper in the regional capital of Gorno-Altaisk, was arrested in April 2022 after publishing information about the Russian army's mass killing of civilians in the Ukrainian city of Bucha, as well as deadly airstrikes against the Mariupol drama theater and maternity hospital.

Throughout the trial, Mikhailov maintained his innocence and pleaded not guilty to the charges against him. In his final word to the court, the publisher called President Vladimir Putin a "war criminal" and urged Russians not to be "seduced by lies, so that they do not become participants in hostilities, do not become murderers and victims."

Besides the eight-year prison sentence, the Gorno-Altaisk City Court also banned Mikhailov

from engaging in journalistic work or publishing activities for four years.

Earlier this month, the independent news outlet Mediazona reported that the Russian authorities had so far launched more than 10,000 cases for "discrediting" the armed forces since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Shortly after Putin ordered troops over the border into Ukraine, Russian lawmakers passed draconian censorship laws banning any criticism of what the Kremlin insists on calling a "special military operation," forcing thousands of journalists and anti-war activists to flee the country.

Original url:
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