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Russia Jails Exiled Ex-Lawmaker Ponomaryov 10 Years in Absentia

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Ilya Ponomaryov. **Social media**

A Moscow court on Wednesday sentenced exiled former lawmaker Ilya Ponomaryov to 10 years in prison in absentia for "justifying terrorism" and spreading "fakes" about the Russian military.

Ponomaryov, who serves as a member of a Russian shadow parliament based in Poland, was accused of violating Russia's wartime censorship laws in a March 2022 video interview in which he "reported knowingly false information" out of "political hatred."

In a statement, Prosecutors did not provide details about the "justifying terrorism" charges pressed against Ponomaryov. However, the independent Medizona news outlet reported that he was accused of approving arson attacks against military sites inside Russia.

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Moscow's Second Western Military Garrison Court handed Ponomaryov a 10-year prison sentence in absentia and banned him from managing websites or social media pages for four years. Prosecutors had requested a 14-year prison sentence for the ex-lawmaker earlier on Wednesday.

Russia outlawed the spread of information it deems to be "fake" about the military shortly after it invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

Ponomaryov was the only State Duma lawmaker to vote against Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. He went into exile in 2016 after being charged with embezzlement, and since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, he has called for the violent overthrow of President Vladimir Putin.

Russian authorities have since labeled Ponomaryov a "foreign agent" and added him to a list of "terrorists and extremists."

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