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Russian Court Sentences 2 Soldiers to Life in Prison for Massacring Family in Occupied Ukraine

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Anton Sopov and Stanislav Rau. **Social media**

A Russian military court sentenced two soldiers to life in prison for the murder of a family of nine, including two children, in occupied Ukraine, the business newspaper Kommersant reported Friday.

The soldiers, Anton Sopov, 21, and Stanislav Rau, 28, were arrested on Oct. 30, 2023, two days after the Kapkanets family was found shot dead in their home in Volnovakha, a city in eastern Ukraine's partially occupied Donetsk region.

The Southern District Military Court in Rostov-on-Don convicted the two men of breaking into the family's home and murdering them. Their case marks a rare instance of Russia acknowledging crimes committed by its forces in Ukraine.

According to Kommersant, Sopov and Rau pleaded not guilty and plan to appeal the ruling.

Prosecutors reportedly held the trial in secrecy, citing military confidentiality.

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When the trial began in July, the state-run TASS news agency reported that the soldiers pleaded guilty to the murder charges but denied having done so "out of hatred based on nationality."

Russian media gave somewhat conflicting accounts of Sopov's and Rau's motives, with TASS describing the murders as part of a "domestic dispute." Kommersant reported that there was a disagreement over obtaining vodka.

Ukrainian authorities, however, claim the two Russian soldiers killed the family of nine after they refused to vacate their home.

"The occupiers killed the Kapkanets family, who were celebrating a birthday and refused to give up their home," Ukraine's human rights ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets said shortly after the massacre last year.

Russian forces seized Volnovakha shortly after Moscow launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and it was largely destroyed by artillery bombardments.

Servicemen in the Russian military have faced accusations of civilian killings in occupied Ukrainian territories, but the Kremlin has consistently denied targeting civilians, dismissing reports of atrocities as fabrications.

AFP contributed reporting.

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