The Moscow Times
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Russia Fines Italian Citizen for Rainbow Peace Flag Near Kremlin

December 03, 2024



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An Italian citizen was fined under Russia's wartime censorship laws for displaying a rainbow peace flag near the Kremlin in Moscow, the independent news website Mediazona reported Tuesday, citing a court ruling.

Ermanno Rizzo, who lives in Moscow with his wife, a Russian citizen, was accused of holding a single-person picket under the Spasskaya Tower on Red Square last Saturday. Rizzo claimed in court that he was only walking and taking pictures with one of the many flags from his home.

Moscow's Tverskoy District Court found Rizzo guilty of "discrediting" the Russian military and ordered him to pay 50,000 rubles ($470), according to Mediazona.

The court argued that the rainbow-colored flag with the Italian word "Pace" ("Peace") "clearly expressed a negative attitude toward the Russian armed forces" and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The court also fined Rizzo 20,000 rubles ($189) for participating in an unauthorized rally and an undisclosed sum for disobeying police orders, according to the police-monitoring website OVD-Info.

Rizzo denied his guilt.

Russia outlawed "discrediting" and spreading "deliberately false" information about the Russian military shortly after it invaded Ukraine nearly three years ago. Russia's censorship laws have effectively banned anti-war statements and news that clashes with the Kremlin's narrative of what it calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine.

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