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Kursk Governor Bans Officials From Censoring Online Criticism

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Acting Kursk region Governor Alexander Khinshtein. **Alexander Khinshtein / VK**

The acting governor of Russia's partially occupied Kursk region has prohibited local officials from deleting online comments critical of their performance, state media reported Monday.

"You can't delete comments except those containing profanity and insults. If the comment is proper but unpleasant, you must respond to it," Alexander Khinshtein was quoted as saying by the state broadcaster Vesti Kursk.

Khinshtein, appointed by President Vladimir Putin last month, acknowledged that he was too busy to respond to messages personally and would only intervene if local officials failed to resolve issues.

He announced that officials' performance would be evaluated monthly using metrics that include their social media activity, according to Vesti Kursk.

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The directive came after displaced residents in the Kursk region criticized a list of 517 missing persons published Thursday by Russia's federal human rights commissioner.

The independent regional news outlet 7x7 reported that many individuals were unable to find their missing loved ones on the list, despite having reported them to authorities. Russia's Human Rights Commissioner, Tatiana Moskalkova, admitted that the list contained the errors on Friday.

Ukrainian forces launched a surprise attack on the Kursk region in August 2024, capturing swathes of Russian territory. Russia has since pushed back some of Kyiv's troops, but it has not yet regained full control over the region.

Last week, Ukraine announced a precision strike on a Russian command post in the region, while Russia claimed that Ukrainian forces had launched a "counterattack."

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