

ECHR Rules Moscow Suppressed Dissent Over Ukraine War

By [AFP](#)

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A man in Moscow walks past an inscription reading "No to war." **Natalia Kolesnikova / AFP**

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled Tuesday that authorities in Russia have engaged in "a coordinated effort to suppress dissent" over the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

According to the Strasbourg-based court, Moscow has imposed "a systemic and widespread pattern of reporting restrictions" over the war. The ruling follows complaints filed by the independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta, exiled broadcaster TV Rain and individual applicants against Russia over wartime censorship.

Dozens of independent Russian media outlets were forced to leave the country and restart operations abroad after lawmakers passed draconian legislation effectively banning public criticism of the war and the use of the word "war" itself in publications and broadcasts.

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The ECHR ruled that these restrictions violated the European Convention on Human Rights, specifically the article protecting freedom of expression. The court stated that the restrictions represented "a coordinated effort to suppress dissent rather than counter any threat to national security."

"National courts had criminalized any reporting or statements that contradicted the official narrative describing the invasion of Ukraine as a 'special military operation'," the ECHR said, referring to the Kremlin's preferred term for the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

"No effort had been made to balance the competing interests at stake, in particular, to take into account a matter of crucial interest to the public, namely a major armed conflict and allegations of war crimes," the court added.

The ECHR, which is part of the Council of Europe, is tasked with upholding the European Human Rights Convention across 46 signatory countries.

Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, it was excluded from the Council of Europe and withdrew from the convention in September 2022. However, the court remains competent to hear cases against Russia that were brought before that date.

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