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Prosecutors Seek 6-Year Sentence for Russian Influencer on Tax Fraud Charges

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Yelena Blinovskaya. **Pelagia Tikhonova / Moskva News Agency**

Russian state prosecutors are seeking a six-year prison sentence for Instagram blogger Yelena Blinovskaya on tax fraud charges, the exiled news outlet Mediazona reported Thursday.

Blinovskaya was arrested at the Russian-Belarusian border in April 2023 on suspicion of underreporting 918 million rubles ($10.1 million) in earnings from online services between 2019 and 2021. She was also accused of laundering 43 million rubles and committing payment fraud.

Blinovskaya, who had 5.3 million Instagram followers at the time of her arrest, marketed herself as a life coach offering self-help courses and personal growth events that gained popularity during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Critics have accused her of defrauding her followers.

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Prosecutors asked Moscow's Savyolovsky District Court to fine Blinovskaya 1.5 million rubles ($16,500), ban her from doing business for five years and seize her assets, which include 50 real estate properties and luxury vehicles.

Blinovskaya pleaded guilty to tax evasion, money laundering and payment fraud. She has repaid 320 million rubles ($3.5 million) of her debt, but prosecutors are seeking to confiscate an additional 857.6 million rubles ($9.4 million) from her.

Russia's Federal Tax Service estimates her total debt, including fines and penalties, at 1.4 billion rubles ($15.4 million).

Blinovskaya's husband, Alexei, volunteered to fight in Ukraine in April 2024 to avoid criminal prosecution.

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