The Moscow Times
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Moscow Court Jails Exiled YouTuber Varlamov 8 Years in Absentia

August 14, 2025



Ilya Varlamov. **Sergei Kiselev / Moskva News Agency**

A Moscow court on Thursday sentenced exiled YouTuber Ilya Varlamov to eight years in prison in absentia on charges of violating Russia's "foreign agent" law and spreading "false information" about the military.

Varlamov, who runs a YouTube travel blog with more than five million subscribers, has lived abroad since Russia launched its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. He has been an outspoken critic of the war.

According to the exiled news outlet Mediazona, prosecutors accused Varlamov of spreading "false information" when he reported on deadly Russian missile strikes in Ukraine in 2023, saying he acted "out of political hatred." They also said he violated foreign agent requirements 19 times.

Russia labeled Varlamov a "foreign agent" in 2023, a designation requiring detailed financial reports and prominent disclaimers on all content he publishes, including social media posts.

Varlamov has refused to comply, vowing to continue posting without the mandated label.

Moscow's Meshchansky District Court also fined Varlamov 99.5 million rubles ($1.2 million) — the amount prosecutors claimed he earned in 2023 — and barred him from running websites or social media channels for four years.

Sentences issued in absentia are typically enforced only if the defendant is extradited to Russia.

Varlamov dismissed the ruling, writing on social media: "It's all going to be OK. We look to the bright future with optimism!"

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https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/08/14/moscow-court-jails-exiled-youtuber-varlamov-8-years-in-absentia-a90216