The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Moscow Court Jails Estonian Museum Director in Absentia Over Anti-Putin Banner

September 25, 2025



An Anti-Putin banner at Narva Castle. **Narva Museum**

A Moscow court on Thursday sentenced Maria Smorzhevskikh-Smirnova, the director of the Narva Museum in eastern Estonia, to 10 years in prison in absentia on charges of spreading "war fakes" and "rehabilitating Nazism," the exiled news outlet Mediazona reported.

Smorzhevskikh-Smirnova drew attention in 2023 for hanging a banner on the walls of Narva Castle, which overlooks the Russian border town of Ivangorod, depicting President Vladimir Putin bloodied and labeled a "war criminal."

Russian investigators accused her of helping display similar banners during Victory Day in 2023, 2024 and 2025. She has been on Russia's wanted list since the summer of 2024 and was formally charged in January.

The first banner at Narva Castle was unfurled on May 9, 2023, as Russia's Ivangorod marked

Victory Day with patriotic music and videos. The banner has appeared every May 9 since then.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/09/25/moscow-court-jails-estonian-museum-director-in-absentia-over-anti-putin-banner-a90618