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Russian Police Search Home of U.S.-Based Independent Media Founder's Mother

October 24, 2025



Anastasia Chumakova. **@astrapress**

Russian law enforcement officers on Friday searched the apartment of the mother of the U.S.-based founder and editor-in-chief of the independent news outlet Astra, in the central city of Ulyanovsk.

The search was carried out as part of a criminal case concerning Anastasia Chumakova for allegedly spreading "false information" about the Russian military.

Violation of wartime censorship law carries a penalty of up to 10 years in prison.

Astra reported that FSB agents, police officers and investigators arrived at the home of Chumakova's 61-year-old mother early in the morning, reviewed her personal messages and seized electronic devices.

Investigators were said to have questioned Chumakova's mother as a witness in the case.

The outlet notes that Chumakova has neither lived nor been registered at her mother's apartment for over a decade.

Related article: Russia Labels Telegram News Channel Astra 'Foreign Agent'

Chumakova had been a New York correspondent for the Russian broadcaster RTVI until her firing in December 2021.

She launched Astra in the first week of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, driven by a commitment to counter wartime censorship and provide truthful reporting on the conflict.

Russia's Justice Ministry labeled Astra a "foreign agent" last October on accusations of spreading "inaccurate information" about government policy in order to promote a "negative image" of the Russian military.

In March, an Ulyanovsk court fined Chumakova 35,000 rubles ($433) for failing to report herself as the head of a "foreign agent" media outlet.

Chumakova said she moved to an unidentified "tropical state" a month after launching Astra, where she lived in a tent due to her inability to afford full-time housing at the time.

"Life was simple: rainwater for showering, washing dishes and all other needs. Drinking water came from a well. A gas cylinder was used for cooking and heating water for showers, and solar panels to provide electricity," Chumakova said in a December 2023 interview.

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