

Prosecutors Find No Signs of Extremism at Dozhd TV, Report Says

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Prosecutors have found no signs of extremism in a poll run by independent television channel Dozhd on Sunday about the World War II Siege of Leningrad.

Federal and St. Petersburg lawmakers had asked Prosecutor General Yury Chaika to examine Dozhd over the poll, which asked whether Leningrad, now St. Petersburg, should have been surrendered to the Nazis to save lives.

Between 300,000 and 1.5 million people died during the siege, which lasted almost 900 days before eventually being lifted in January 1944.

The poll was quickly removed after attracting some angry comments from Internet users and the channel has since issued a number of apologies for unintentionally offending their audience.

The apologies have failed to satisfy a number of officials, who decided to involve

the Prosecutor General's Office.

The measure is seen by many as part of an opportunistic and concerted attack on an independent broadcaster that frequently gives airtime to the activities of Kremlin opponents.

However, an unidentified prosecutor told Interfax on Friday that although the check is ongoing, it is unlikely to result in the channel's closure.

"It is already obvious" that prosecutors won't have to close the channel, in so much as Dozhd's violations do not amount to 'extremism', " the prosecutor said.

The official results of the inquiry are not expected to be released until next week.

It is not the only examination related to the poll that the Prosecutor General's Office has been asked to carry out.

At least five cable providers, including VimpelCom and Rostelecom, have suspended Dozhd broadcasts, and the presidential human rights council wants prosecutors to check whether those companies' actions violated consumer rights laws.

Dozhd has lost about 20 percent of its viewership due to the suspensions, though it has increased its number of paid Internet subscribers — a sign of continuing support for the station.

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