

Ex-Russia Football Captain Denisov Denounces War in Ukraine

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Igor Denisov **Elena Rybakova (CC BY-SA 3.0)**

The former captain of Russia's national football team has publicly denounced Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

“To me, this war is a catastrophe, a complete horror,” Ivan Denisov, 38, told Russian sports reporter Nobel Arustamyan in an interview on the journalist's [YouTube channel](#) Wednesday, more than 100 days since the start of the conflict.

Denisov also referred to the ongoing detention of Russian anti-war protesters and picketers, telling Arustamyan: “I don't know if I'll get jailed or killed for these words.”

Since the start of the war on Feb. 24, Russian authorities have introduced jail terms of up to 15 years for spreading what the government considers to be “fake news” about the military's actions in Ukraine.

Denisov, a former star midfielder for Zenit St. Petersburg, said he filmed a video in the early

days of the war calling on President Vladimir Putin to stop the invasion, but that Russian media outlets had declined to publish it.

“I even said I’m ready to kneel in front of [Putin]. Me, a proud guy,” Denisov said. “I was ready to get down on my knees in front of him to make it all stop.”

Denisov is only one of a handful of Russian athletes to speak out publicly against Moscow’s war in Ukraine. Among Russia’s currently active football players, only men’s national team strikers Fyodor Smolov and Alexander Sobolev, as well as women’s national team forward Nadezhda Karpova, have made their anti-war views public.

Denisov, who won 54 caps during his career from 2008 to 2016, criticized other Russian athletes for their silence.

He also spoke in support of suspending Russian athletes from international competition, saying “you, me, we are all involved in what is happening.”

“What’s happening now has to be stopped and it can be stopped with something tough on us.”

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