

Russia Opens Criminal ‘Army Fakes’ Probe Against Opposition Deputy

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Helga Pirogova. t.me/nsk2020ru

Russian authorities have [launched](#) a criminal investigation against a regional independent deputy on Friday on suspicion of spreading “fake” information about the Russian army, a new crime introduced following the country’s invasion of Ukraine.

Helga Pirogova, 33, was arrested late Tuesday when leaving a charity auction in support of those prosecuted for taking part in Russia’s 2021 anti-government protests.

Russia’s Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, opened the case against Pirogova over a tweet reacting to a recent independent media [article](#) on Russian volunteers’ motivations in enlisting to fight in Ukraine.

In her tweet, Pirogova, 33, expressed horror at the mother of a deceased volunteer soldier praising local authorities’ “incredible” arrangement of her son’s funeral.

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"It's simply inexpressible; [I] want to revive them all, slap them in the face, and let them go back to their graves. Otherwise, this luxurious funeral would have been arranged in vain," Pirogova allegedly wrote in a now-deleted tweet [cited](#) by Andrei Panfyorov, the local head of the ruling United Russia party who publicly appealed for Pirogova to be prosecuted earlier this week.

In a video posted Tuesday, fellow opposition deputy Anton Kartavin [said](#) Pirogova, who faces a maximum punishment of three years in prison, is currently four months pregnant.

Pirogova was elected to the Novosibirsk Council of Deputies in 2020 with the support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's "Smart Voting" strategy.

The case against her was opened at the [orders](#) of Investigative Committee chief Alexander Bastrykin. The order was made public just minutes before the investigation's launch.

Kremlin critics say the new laws against spreading "fakes" about the Russian army or "discrediting" the military are aimed at stamping out dissent and blocking out information that contrasts with the official narrative of its military campaign in Ukraine.

Several people have been charged under the laws for publicly criticizing the war, which the Kremlin calls a "special military operation."

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