

Russian Man in Court for Critical Ukraine Interview

By [AFP](#)

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Social media

A Russian man was in court Wednesday after he criticized Moscow's Ukraine assault in an interview to a foreign media outlet as authorities take the crackdown on dissent to new heights.

Public criticism of the Kremlin's offensive in Ukraine has been outlawed, and a number of prominent and ordinary Russians have received long prison terms for openly denouncing the Russian army on social media and elsewhere.

In March, authorities launched a criminal probe against a man who criticized the Ukraine offensive in a man-on-the-street interview with a foreign media outlet, in a first such case after President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine in 2022.

Yuri Kokhovets, 37, was interviewed by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty outside a central

Moscow metro station in July 2022.

Kokhovets has been accused of spreading false information about the army and being motivated by "political hatred" and now faces up to 10 years in prison.

His trial began in July.

"Our government is telling us that it wants to fight nationalists but it is bombing shopping malls," he told the foreign media outlet last year.

He also said the Russian army had killed "peaceful people" for "no reason" in Bucha outside the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, where civilian corpses were discovered after Russian forces retreated from the town at the start of the offensive.

"Our government unleashed this: Putin and his top people," the Muscovite said. "Only one person can stop this."

According to the OVD-Info protest-monitoring group, Kokhovets was detained in March, held for 48 hours and released with a 500-ruble (\$5) fine for "hooliganism."

But the charges against him were later tightened.

Russia has waged an unprecedented crackdown on critical voices, portraying its offensive in Ukraine in an exclusively positive way.

Nearly all Russian opposition figures are either in exile or in prison.

According to OVD-Info, around 20,000 people across Russia have been detained since February 2022.

During this week alone, Russian courts are examining 59 political cases, the monitor said.

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