



Photo from Ivan Losev's Instagram

17.01.2023, 15:45 [Zabaykalsky Krai](#)

свой опыт

A Russian man got fined for a dream about Zelenskyy

In the western Russian city of Chita, a 26-year-old sauna owner Ivan Losev **got a court fine** in the amount of 30 thousand rubles (US\$ 437).

He was charged with discrediting the Russian army (article 20.3.3. of the Russian Code on Administrative Offences) for posting several stories on Instagram — in particular, for retelling his dream about the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy. OVD-Info is publishing Ivan's story.

ОБ ЭТОМ НИКТО НЕ УЗНАЕТ

Если об этом никто не напишет. Подпишитесь на регулярные пожертвования ОВД-Инфо, чтобы плохие дела не оставались в тишине.

ПОДПИСАТЬСЯ

Текст на русском

It was a normal Friday in late November. I was on my way to work when I got a call on my work phone from an unknown number. I picked up — it was a police officer on the other end: «So and so, Ivan Alexandrovitch, » he said, «we want to invite you in for questioning. We identified discreditation of the Russian army in your social media posts».

First, the police officer mentioned the social network «VK»: apparently I was distributing antiwar publications there. I responded that I barely use VK and don't post anything on there. The inspector rummaged through his documents and said: «Oh, sorry, my bad. It was Instagram, not VK». After that we agreed on a time when I would come by the police department.

I immediately shared what happened with my Instagram followers. Many of them sympathized with me and said that it's awful and scary. I, on the other hand, felt calm after the call from the police. I'm actually a pretty anxious person, but this time I didn't feel scared at all.

I am convinced that the same holds for being accused of discrediting the Russian army as for the foreign agent law. If the person in front of you is on the foreign agent list, that actually just goes to show that they are a decent person. Same deal here: if you got charged with discrediting the Russian army, you can consider yourself a decent person.

Besides, I'm still pretty optimistic about the outcome of this war. I am convinced that Ukraine will win and that it will happen extremely soon. That means that those of us who are facing charges for our anti-war stance and are imprisoned will be free again very soon — and we will be heroes, whereas those who hid, were too scared to speak up and therefore stayed quiet, those who supported the regime and complied with its cannibalistic laws will blush with shame.

Such are the times — all my fear is gone. It is much more important to me that I'm not ashamed of my actions when the war is over. If after many years my kids or grandkids ask me who I was back then, I will be able to say with pride that I was never an accomplice of the regime.

On Monday at the appointed time I headed to the police department. I was expecting a typical brazen cop like you see in TV shows. I thought I'd need to argue with him and try to prove my point.

That didn't happen. I was greeted by an affable young inspector. I could tell that deep down he maybe even agreed with me. His eyes reflected shame [with regards to the situation]. He asked me to write an explanatory report.

I said that I consider myself a pacifist, a liberal and a man of peace. I explained that I find this war disgusting and sordid and that I am appalled by the fact that my country, which I love dearly, is committing genocide against the Ukrainian people. Because I am a patriot, I could not stay quiet and published the posts in which the police detected discreditation of the Russian army.

No one at the police department argued with me. The police officer wrote down what I said and let me reread it, after which he asked me to sign that I agree with the written

statement. Then I was told that I was to appear in court on December 8.

I requested access to the materials of my case to find out for which Instagram posts I was being prosecuted. Shortly before that I used the word «war» in an Instagram story about my car, and I was sure that it was that story that prompted the administrative case.

That story, however, was not even mentioned in the materials. Other stories I have posted were referenced: one featuring a joke about a Molotov cocktail, one where I said that the mobilization of Russian citizens is lame, one where I urged Russians who had gone off to fight in Ukraine to surrender, one where I criticized [the Russian defense minister Sergei] Shoigu and linked a source which showed that he had lied about the number of Russians fallen in the war with Ukraine, and finally, one where I described my dream about [Volodymyr] Zelenskyy. I was shocked. I didn't think that the authorities would monitor my Instagram stories because they are only up for 24 hours.

I assume that the Federal Security Service started monitoring my account in the summer. That's when I posted the Molotov cocktail story.

I own a sauna. People often drink while in the sauna and leave empty bottles behind. Back in 2020, my friends and I wondered how much money we would be able to make if we collected these bottles for several years. I had a warehouse next to the sauna, and in two years I had collected over 20 thousand bottles.



Photo from Ivan Losev's Instagram

Before the war I decided to dismantle the warehouse and build a new sauna in its place. I went to a glass recycling center and was told that you get almost six rubles a bottle. I got excited and decided to continue filling up a container with bottles until the repurposing of the warehouse was complete. We finished the renovation after the war had started. I took all the bottles and went to the recycling center again. There I was told that glass prices had gone down — now the price was not per bottle but per kilo, and the amount was half of what it had been before.

I was upset by this news and made a joke on Instagram that I would have been better off sending these bottles to Ukraine — they could have made Molotov cocktails out of them and used them against the Russians. Then the war

would be over faster, and glass prices in Russia would go up again.

That would seem like a harmless joke, but even Instagram saw some sort of insult in it and deleted my story. It was up for less than an hour, but the Federal Security Service managed to see it, take a screenshot and document it.

The most surprising thing to me was that the posts for which I was facing administrative charges included a dream about Zelenskyy.

I had a dream that I was being mobilized. That happened directly after Putin announced the [partial] military mobilization in September. I dreamt that I had just arrived at some sort of preparatory camp when it was stormed by the Ukrainian Armed forces headed by Zelenskyy. They tie everyone up and are getting ready to execute us. At that moment, Zelenskyy who is walking by notices me and says: «Hey, I've seen your Instagram stories! Glory to Ukraine». I respond: «Glory to the heroes!» Zelenskyy cheerfully pats me on the shoulder and says: «Let him go and shoot everyone else». As we stand there watching, I ask him: «Can I take a selfie with you for my Insta?» He says «Sure». That was it. It was an amusing dream so I decided to share it with my followers.

I have no idea why the police decided to take issue with that specific Instagram story. The other stories would have been enough for a case of discrediting the Russian army.

I hadn't gotten any calls or messages before December 8. I found out that the hearing of my case had already passed from the decision published on the court's website. I called the court, quarreled with a girl who introduced herself as a secretary. That didn't do anything. I was told to come

on December 12 to pick up the statement of decision. It said I was to pay a fine of 30 thousand rubles.

I have decided that despite that administrative case, I will stay in Russia for now and will continue to openly speak out [against the war]. My whole life I have criticized the regime in one way or another. I have quite a liberal family who is opposed to the current government. My mom realized that Putin is not a good person after his «it sank» speech (about the 2000 sinking of the «Kursk» submarine and botched rescue operation — *OVD-Info*). My father came to the same conclusion when Russia invaded Georgia in 2008.

At the time not everyone had Internet access, and there were way fewer liberal-minded media. Many people believed that the 2008 crisis was caused by the changes in mortgage lending in the US and didn't want to put effort into figuring out what had actually happened. The Russian Far East was hit the hardest. Putin raised the import tariff for foreign cars. A lot of people around here used to make a living from hauling cars from Japan. With this new law of his, Putin basically killed business in our region.

I was 12 years old in 2008. I didn't know much about politics back then, but I remember well a conversation my dad had with a friend. They were talking about a mutual friend who took out a loan before the crisis to build a house and to buy car transporters to haul cars from Japan. When the crisis hit, everything collapsed. The guy had his house and transporters taken away from him [by bailiffs]. His wife left him and took the kids with her. He didn't know what to do, so he hanged himself.

Even though I was a child back then, I understood that this guy's blood was on Putin's hands. I realized that Putin couldn't be a good president if so many people suffered from his actions. I couldn't yet articulate my attitude towards the government at the time, didn't have the words for it, but I decided for myself that Putin was not a good person.

When I grew up, I started speaking up about it more. I started taking part in protests. We don't have many opposition protests in Chita and not many people show up for them. We had our only large-scale rally after Navalny released his film about Putin's palace.

Somehow the outbreak of the war did not elicit the same reaction from the people as that film. When the war started on February 24th, I thought that even the most brainwashed Russians would finally come to their senses because a war is the ultimate disaster. It seemed to me that by declaring the war, Putin was signing his own death warrant.

But people did not come to their senses. I live near the central square where the anti-war protest was supposed to take place. I went there in the evening — and there was no one there, only police with paddy wagons. That evening I went to our city's webpage on VK. There were posts about the start of the «special military operation», and people were supporting it.

I am lucky that everyone in my family shares my political views, including those about the war in Ukraine. My dad is an old-fashioned man who doesn't get along with computers and doesn't know how to use the Internet, but he can think critically and realizes that an invader cannot be a good person. My mom is a fan of TV Rain. She watches all their programs and then retells them to my dad.

When my parents found out about the administrative case, they, of course, supported me. My dad said: «Don't worry, it will be alright. And if it isn't right now, it will be soon». My mom really worried about me. The other day, though, she also got a call from the police asking to come by to write an explanatory report. She is apparently discrediting the Russian army on [the Russian social network] Odnoklassniki. So our whole family is now «bastards and traitors.»

It has become more difficult to stay close to many of my friends. I stopped talking to a lot of people. Some became ardent pro-war nationalists, others just don't want to meet up anymore because I always bring up Ukraine. Some of these people may agree with me but are too scared or too tired of talking about it.

I also find it emotionally taxing to constantly follow the news, but it also makes me feel calmer: this way I am more confident in my stance and am reminded that I am right. When so many people around you support the war, you start doubting yourself: whether you're doing the right thing, thinking the right thing. But then, when you see the killing of a 4-year-old girl with Down syndrome by a Russian missile in Vinnytsia being described by [the editor-in-chief of the state-affiliated Russia Today] Simonyan as «collateral damage» and no one around you seems to care, you realize that you are doing everything right.

Another reason why it's easy to start doubting myself is that I see that so many people are actually supporting the war. Many of my Instagram followers who used to agree with my criticism of the government started trying to prove me wrong after February 24. Some said: «I, of course, understand that you're criticizing Putin. He is indeed not a good president, but this war was the right thing to do. Ukrainians have no shame. It's time to put them back in their place». Soon afterwards I lost a lot of Instagram followers and started receiving threats in my DMs.

The people sending the threats said they would find me in the city and smash my face, that they have connections in the Federal Security Service who will find me, take me to jail and torture me. Someone wrote that my whole family are bastards and scumbags. «How can you even call yourselves Russian?», they said, and threatened to kill all of our relatives in the region.

I knew that those threats came from clowns who are only brave on the Internet, but I still bought pepper spray for the first time in my life just in case. Since the start of the war I've already had altercations on the street because of my [anti-war] stance — once on the road with a driver whose car had the letter Z on it, then in a bar when a strange man called me a Nazi. Once I even had a fight with an acquaintance who started insulting me for supporting Ukraine in this war.

Despite all that, at the moment I'm not planning on going anywhere. I am, of course, considering the option of leaving the country, but I also love my Chita. I would like to travel but always come back home afterwards.

If it gets really rough, I'll try to go to Mongolia. If I make it — cool, if I don't, I'll land in jail. If I do end up in jail, I'll spend maybe a year there, but then I'll come out as a hero in a new country which will start reflecting on the havoc it has wrought.

Perhaps I will even go into politics. I've always dreamt of running for governor of the region Zabaykalsky Krai and making my homeland even more beautiful. I think the experience of serving time for an administrative offense is a great foundation for becoming a good politician.

Recorded by Karina Merkuryeva

ЧТО Я МОГУ С ЭТИМ СДЕЛАТЬ?

Прочитать, рассказать, поддержать. Подпишитесь на регулярные пожертвования ОВД-Инфо, чтобы как можно больше людей узнали о политических репрессиях в России сегодня.

ПОДДЕРЖАТЬ

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