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Russia - Roman Anin and Ekaterina Fomina arrested in absentia

On 17 June 2024, the Drogomilov District Court of Moscow, Russia, arrested human rights defenders and journalists **Roman Anin** and **Ekaterina Fomina** in absentia. Their arrest was prompted by the charges in the alleged crime of spreading so-called “fake information” about the actions of Russian military personnel in Ukraine. The Court has issued an arrest warrant for both human rights defenders.

[Roman Anin](#) is a human rights defender and journalist. He is the founder and editor-in-chief of [iStories \(Important Stories\) media outlet](#), which publishes investigative pieces on Russia's rampant corruption and various human rights violations. Since the start of Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine, iStories have focused on investigating crimes committed by the Russian army in Ukraine, including crimes of kidnapping of Ukrainian children and their forcible deportation to Russia. Roman Anin has received some of the most prestigious awards in Russian investigative journalism, including the Artem Borovik award, the Youlian Semenov award and the Andrey Sakharov award. He was also a member of the Panama Papers investigative team that received the Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting in 2017.

[Ekaterina Fomina](#) is a woman human rights defender and journalist. She has been collaborating with various prominent Russian human rights media outlets, including Novaya Gazeta and iStories. She is the former editor-in-chief of the human rights media outlet “Glasnaya,” a feminist media outlet profiling women's voices, breaking gender stereotypes and advancing gender equality. Ekaterina Fomina's current reporting focuses on crimes committed by the Russian military within the framework of Russia's full-scale invasion in Ukraine, including the weaponizations of sexual and sexualized violence.

On 17 June 2024, the Drogomilov District Court of Moscow, Russia, arrested human rights defenders and journalists Roman Anin and Ekaterina Fomina in absentia. On 10 January 2024, military investigators of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation launched a criminal case against Ekaterina Fomina for a publication concerning the crimes committed by the Russian military in Ukraine which she authored for iStories in August 2022. In that publication, Ekaterina Fomina interviewed a Russian military officer, who confessed to executing an unarmed Ukrainian civilian in Andriivka village, located in Bucha district of the Kyiv region in Ukraine. The same interview revealed the chain of command in the military action in Andriivka, a village now fully destroyed by the Russian military, as the interviewed officer revealed the names of the commanding officers, who gave orders to execute civilians.

For this journalistic piece, the Russian authorities accused Ekaterina Fomina of so-called public circulation of “fake information on the deployment of the Russian army and the state bodies' execution of its powers”, which is a criminal offence envisioned by the Part 2 (b, g) of the Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. Roman Anin stated that he is unaware of a criminal case against him, and assumes that he is being persecuted as an editor in editor-in-chief of iStories.

At the start of its full-scale war in Ukraine in February 2022, the Russian authorities have introduced new war-time censorship laws, aimed at silencing voices that have been critical to the state policy of violence and occupation. Since then, the Russian Federation systemically targets human rights defenders, lawyers and journalists for their public condemnation of Russia's war in

Ukraine. In 2022, the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Ingushetia launched three criminal cases against woman human rights defender [Isabella Evloeva](#). In the summer of 2022, human rights defender and lawyer [Dmitry Talantov](#) was arrested and placed in pre-trial detention for the anti-war statements that he posted on Facebook. In 2023, woman human rights defender Svetlana Anokhina faced a criminal case against her for non-specified social media posts. In February 2024 human rights defender [Oleg Orlov](#) was sentenced to 2 and a half years of prison time for repeated 'discreditation' of Russian armed forces.

Front Line Defenders condemns the criminal persecution and arrest in absentia of human rights defenders and journalists Ekaterina Fomina and Roman Anin. The organization urges that the expansion of the Russian Federation's Criminal Code with a set of articles against "discreditation" and "fakes" against the Russian military fosters censorship in the country. Front Line Defenders reiterates its concern about the systemic grave misuse of the set of new censorship laws to silence human rights defenders, lawyers, and journalists in Russia.

Front Line Defenders calls upon the Russian Federation to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally cease the targeting of human rights defenders and journalists Ekaterina Fomina and Roman Anin, and drop all arrest and search warrants made against them;
2. Repeal the set of articles of the Criminal Code and the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation on "discreditation" and "fakes" against the actions of the Russian military, as they limit freedom of speech and are being used by the authorities to disproportionately target human rights defenders and journalists;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Russian Federation can carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in line with the Russian Federation's international human rights obligations and commitments.

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