

Russian blogger jailed for five years for pro-Ukraine posts

MOSCOW - A Russian court on Wednesday sentenced a blogger to five years in a Siberian penal colony for "inciting hatred and extremism" by posting videos online criticising pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine, in a verdict condemned by rights activists.



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The court in Tomsk, western Siberia, also banned Vadim Tyumentsev, 35, from using the Internet for three years, according to the non-governmental group Sova, which works on monitoring nationalism and xenophobia in Russia.

Sova said Tyumentsev's sentence for "inciting inter-ethnic hatred and for extremist activities" was "too harsh, considering it was only for posting videos online".

In the YouTube videos, Tyumentsev notably called for refugees from east Ukraine's separatists areas of Donetsk and Lugansk to be expelled from Russia, accusing them of "betraying Ukraine".

It is not the first time Russian courts have cracked down on critical voices online. In a similar case last week, a 26-year-old woman was jailed for two years on charges of calling for separatism and inciting extremism after she shared a social media post about a pro-Ukrainian rally.

"The Russian government seems determined to prevent free expression in any form, including in social media," Mark

Lagon, president of the US-based rights watchdog Freedom House, said in a statement in response to the latest verdict.

Kiev and the West blame Russia for fuelling the bloody conflict in eastern Ukraine, where over 9,000 people have died since April 2014. Sporadic clashes between government troops and pro-Moscow rebels have continued despite a ceasefire.

Source: AFP

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