[RU] Criminal liability for “false reports” and “harmful calls” expanded

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On 4 March 2022, both chambers of the Russian parliament adopted and submitted, for the President’s signature, amendments to the criminal law. On the same day, the President signed the amendments into law. The Criminal Code of Russia (see IRIS 2020-6/6) now has three new articles. Article 207-3 introduces liability for “public dissemination of knowingly false information on the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the interests of the protection of the Russian Federation and its citizens, and the sustainability of international peace and security”. The penalty ranges from a fine of RUB 700 000 (about EUR 6 000) up to an imprisonment of 3 years. A grave violation under the same act shall be punished with an imprisonment of 10 to 15 years.

Article 280-3 introduces liability for public actions aimed at “discrediting the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the interest of the protection of interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens, and the sustainability of international peace and security, including through public calls to counteract [such a use of force]”. Following an administrative punishment for such a public misbehavior within the previous 12 months, a person shall face a fine of RUB 100 000 or an imprisonment of up to 3 years. In a case where such actions led, in particular, to mass disorder, the penalty increases to 5 years' imprisonment.

According to a new Article 284-2, public calls, by a Russian citizen, for foreign or international sanctions against the Russian Federation, Russian legal entities or citizens, shall be punishable by a fine or imprisonment of up to 5 years.

Citing the adoption of the amendments, a number of international media outlets suspended reporting from within the Russian territory, while certain Russian media outlets stopped news reporting and erased archives related to the Russian war against Ukraine.

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