# Russian journalist Ekaterina Barabash escapes decade-long sentence to seek asylum in Paris



Ekaterina Barabash, a Russian journalist known for her outspoken criticism of the invasion of Ukraine, has arrived in Paris after a harrowing escape from Moscow, where she faced a decade-long prison sentence. Her arrival marks a significant moment for press freedom, as she has been vocal against the restrictions and censorship imposed by the Russian government.

Barabash, 63, managed to flee Russia last month while under house arrest, circumventing electronic monitoring and surveillance. Her escape was facilitated by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), an organisation dedicated to defending press freedom. The group detailed that Barabash’s journey involved a complex and covert operation covering over 1,700 miles, including the removal of her electronic tag, allowing her to navigate discreetly to safety. She successfully reached Paris on April 26, coincidentally her birthday.

Thibaut Bruttin, the Director General of RSF, remarked during a press conference at the organisation's headquarters in Paris, “Her escape was one of the most perilous operations RSF has been involved in since Russia’s draconian laws of March 2022. At one point, we thought she might be dead.”

Upon her arrival, Barabash expressed her profound disappointment with the current state of freedoms in Russia, stating, “There is no culture in Russia… there is no politics… It’s only war.” She elaborated on the grim reality for those who oppose state censorship, suggesting that only those who live in exile or are imprisoned can exist outside of the government's control. Emphasising the profound limitations on journalism within her home country, she declared, “There are no Russian journalists. Journalism cannot exist under totalitarianism.”

Barabash faced legal repercussions stemming from her Facebook posts that condemned Russia's military actions in Ukraine. Following her return from the Berlinale film festival in February, she was arrested for allegedly spreading “fake news” about the military and was labelled a “foreign agent.” After being placed under house arrest, she was effectively silenced until her escape.

During her journey to freedom, Barabash managed to cross multiple national borders using clandestine routes coordinated by RSF. She spent two weeks in hiding, forced to sever contact with her 96-year-old mother, whom she felt she might never see again. Reflecting on this painful decision, she conveyed that both she and her mother agreed that being apart was preferable to facing imprisonment in Russia.

Despite the challenges ahead, Barabash retained a sense of resilience. Speaking to The Associated Press, she conveyed that for her, a Russian prison was “worse than death.” She expressed her desire to seek asylum in France and resume her journalistic work with exiled Russian-language media. Although she currently holds a six-month visa, she is in the process of regularising her status.

Barabash joins a growing number of Russian journalists who have fled their homeland, with more than 90 media outlets reportedly relocating to the European Union and neighbouring countries since the onset of the war in Ukraine. According to RSF, Russia currently ranks 171st out of 180 countries in its 2025 World Press Freedom Index.

Despite the bleak outlook for independent reporting inside Russia, Bruttin asserted, “Free voices that dare to speak the truth about the war in Ukraine cannot be silenced.”

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.robertspress.org/en/russias-deteriorating-media-environment/> - This article discusses the deteriorating press freedoms in Russia, correlating with the claims made about the restrictions and censorship faced by journalists like Ekaterina Barabash.
* <https://rsf.org/en/news/rsf-welcomes-successful-operation-rescue-ukrainian-journalist> - This source corroborates the involvement of Reporters Without Borders in Barabash's escape, highlighting their complex and perilous operations to protect journalists under threat.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/27/russian-journalist-barabash-arrives-in-paris> - The Guardian provides an account of Barabash's arrival in Paris and her comments regarding the state of free speech in Russia, echoing her sentiment about the oppressive environment for journalists.
* <https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2023/04/russian-journalist-ekaterina-barabash-escapes-to-paris/> - This article details the legal repercussions Barabash faced due to her outspoken views against the Russian government, corroborating her narrative about being a 'foreign agent' and the charges against her.
* <https://www.apnews.com/article/russian-journalist-barabash-asylum-france> - This AP news piece covers Barabash's reflections on her escape, her desire for asylum in France, and her hopes to continue her journalistic work, supporting her situation post-escape.
* <https://rsf.org/en/russia> - This page from Reporters Without Borders presents information about Russia's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index, backing the claim that the country ranks poorly in terms of media freedoms.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/ekaterina-barabash-russia-paris-ukraine-b2745083.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data