
No need for 'show trials' of Western journalists, but responsible reporting is key – Lavrov on unproven Covid-19 allegations

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Journalists should be held responsible for the articles they publish, but public “show trials” are not necessary, according to Russian FM Sergey Lavrov’s comments on the conduct of several Western media outlets.

Lavrov spoke in reference to three major Western news outlets – Bloomberg, the New York Times and the Financial Times – publishing headlines that asked why the coronavirus hasn’t killed more Russians, and making unproven allegations that the Russian authorities have been under-reporting the true Covid-19 death toll by as much as 70 percent.

“I am generally opposed to holding a show trial of journalists, but journalists should be held responsible for what they publish,” the foreign minister told RBK on Friday.

He added that issues with the accuracy of reported information deserve “special attention” from the regulating authorities and expressed his disdain for those who are using the extreme and devastating situation of a global pandemic to “smear their political opponents.”

He also mentioned the £200,000 fine levied by the UK media and postal-service regulator Ofcom on RT London in 2019 for its allegedly biased reporting of the Syrian conflict, and noted that RT has yet to see any concrete evidence that justified the penalty.

The Russian embassy in the United States has asked the US publications to retract their statements, and Roskomnadzor, Russia’s media regulator, has launched a formal investigation into the conduct of all three publications in question.

