

Activists Are Reaching Russians Behind Putin's Propaganda Wall | WIRED

By Morgan Meaker

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René has nothing to do with the invasion of Ukraine. The 34-year-old lives more than 1,000 km away in Nuremberg, Germany. He has no family there, and he's never been to the country. But when Russia invaded, he wanted to help. So on the dating app Tinder, he changed his location to Moscow and started talking to women there about the war.

"I had a conversation with a girl who said [the invasion] is only a military operation and the Ukrainians are killing their own people and stuff like that, so I got into an argument with her," says René, who asks not to share his surname because he doesn't want his clients to know about his activism. "I also had some reactions like, 'Thank you for telling us.'"

Since the Kremlin invaded Ukraine, Russians have existed behind a wall of propaganda that protects them from the details of what is happening on the ground. Russia's state media calls the invasion a "special military operation," never a war. Troops are pictured handing out aid, not blowing up buildings. According to official pollsters, the Kremlin's narrative is sticking.

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