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Russian Journalists Handed Prison Terms For Alleged Ties To Navalny

Four Russian journalists have been sentenced to 5 1/2 years in prison for their links to the team of the late opposition leader Aleksei Navalny. (file photo)

Four Russian journalists have been sentenced by a Moscow court to 5 1/2 years in prison each for their activities linked to the late opposition leader Aleksei Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK), which Russian authorities have designated as an "extremist organization."

The journalists -- Antonina Favorskaya, Sergei Karelin, Konstantin Gabov, and Artyom Kriger -- were convicted after a closed-door trial for their contributions to YouTube channels affiliated with FBK before it was outlawed in 2021.

The court on April 15 also barred the defendants from working as journalists for three years after their release.

After the verdicts and sentences were **pronounced**, the journalists' supporters started applauding and chanting: "Guys, you are the best!"

Kriger told supporters: "Everything will be okay, guys, do not worry, sooner or later all this will be over. Those who sentenced me will for sure be convicted themselves."

Bailiffs then started shouting at Kriger and cleared the courtroom.

All four journalists have repeatedly denied the charges.

The trial, which **started** in early October 2024, was held behind closed doors with supporters and journalists only allowed to attend the reading out of the verdicts and sentences.

Favorskaya and Kriger are reporters for the independent outlet SOTAVision, itself labeled a "foreign agent" by the Russian government.

'Independent Journalist Is Equated With Extremism'

Gabov and Karelin are freelance journalists who have contributed to major international media organizations, including Reuters and the Associated Press. Gabov has also contributed to Radio Liberty, Radio Free Europe's Russian-language service.

"I have never been a member of any political party and always considered it my duty as a journalist to objectively express the opinions of people with diverse views to help them be heard by the authorities," Gabov said in his final statement to the court.

“Independent journalism [in Russia] is equated with extremism.”

Karelin stressed in his final statement that the channel he was accused of working with wasn't outlawed as extremist at the time he contributed to it.

“Remorse is considered to be a mitigating circumstance. It’s the criminals who need to have remorse for what they did. But I am in prison for my work, for the honest and impartial attitude to journalism, FOR THE LOVE for my family and country,” he said in a written statement to the court.

The prosecution had sought up to six years in prison for each defendant. The trial was closed to the public, with authorities citing warnings from Russia’s Center for Combating Extremism, which claimed the FBK might attempt to disrupt proceedings.

The sentencing is part of a broader crackdown on journalists and former associates of Navalny, who died in prison in February 2024 under disputed circumstances while serving a 19-year sentence on charges widely regarded as politically motivated.

His death prompted international outrage and intensified scrutiny of Russia’s treatment of political prisoners and independent media.

Human rights organizations report that dozens of journalists are currently detained in Russia on similar charges, as the government continues to tighten control over dissenting voices.