

Court Refuses to Free Blogger

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The Moscow City Court implicitly defied the Supreme Court, refusing to set free a businessman-turned-prison blogger despite the higher court ruling that "there's every reason to cancel the verdict" in his case.

But the city court on Friday slashed the sentence for Alexei Kozlov from seven to five years, meaning that he can now ask for parole, Vedomosti reported.

Kozlov, the husband of liberal journalist Olga Romanova, was convicted in 2008 of embezzlement and money laundering. He made a name for himself by blogging about his behind-bars experience with the help of his wife.

Kozlov denied wrongdoing. Romanova, who has been campaigning for his release, said the case against him was fabricated by former Federation Council member Vladimir Slutsker, Kozlov's business partner.

The Supreme Court ordered a retrial in the case last week. Kozlov may walk out on parole after Friday's ruling, but he would be expected to plead guilty, which he will not do, Romanova said, adding that the defense will appeal the new verdict.

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