

Chemist Faces New Charges in Poppy Seed Case

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A chemist whose detention in connection with a drug trafficking case sparked outrage among human rights defenders now faces new charges.

Penza Research Institute specialist Olga Zelenina, accused of assisting suspected drug traffickers by authoring a false expert opinion for their lawyers, has also been charged with exceeding her authority at her job, Federal Drug Control Service head Viktor Ivanov told Itar-Tass on Wednesday.

Zelenina is accused of having intentionally written a false expert opinion for lawyers of businessman Sergei Shilov, who is charged with importing 42 tons of food with poppy seeds in 2010 that allegedly contained more than 500 grams of opiates.

A Moscow court on Tuesday released Zelenina from pretrial detention, where she had been held since Aug. 15 on the charges of aiding Shilov and his associates. Twenty-four members

of the Public Chamber had called for her release, and she had received backing from national human rights ombudsman Vladimir Lukin, among others.

The drug control chief said Wednesday that in addition to writing a false expert opinion, Zelenina provided the opinion without having received permission to do so by the management of her institute, which he said constitutes official misconduct.

Zelenina is an authority on hemp and poppy plants, and is a sought-after expert in criminal cases involving drugs made from such plants, according to an article published last week in the scientific journal Nature. It was unclear whether she had received permission from her institute to give expert opinions in other legal cases.

Zelenina faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted of exceeding authority. She faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted of aiding and abetting drug traffickers.

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