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Farber Case to Get Review by Council

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The Kremlin human rights council is set to review the sentence handed down to Ilya Farber, a Moscow designer turned rural schoolteacher who was convicted of receiving $13,000 in bribes from a construction company in exchange for permission to renovate a village club.

A Tver Region court sentenced Farber to seven years in a maximum-security prison Thursday, a verdict labeled "too harsh," by Alexander Brod, the council member who initiated the case's consideration.

In addition, Farber's prosecution was based solely on the testimony of one witness, the prosecutor made an anti-Semitic statement about the defendant and the judge reportedly put pressure on the witnesses, Brod, said by telephone Monday.

The Ostashkov town court convicted Farber, who in 2011 worked as a teacher in the village of Moshenka, of taking two bribes of 300,000 ($9,100) and 132,000 rubles ($4,000) from the regional construction company Gosstroi-1 in exchange for permission to renovate a village club. Prosecutors say he signed off on the completed renovations when in fact none had been

made.

The court ruled that the uncompleted renovation caused 941,000 rubles in damages to the village's budget and ordered Farber to pay a 3.1 million ruble fine to authorities in addition to serving his prison sentence, Interfax reported.

"There are signs that this case was ordered," Brod said. "In Russia, officials who cause multimillion ruble damages to the state usually get suspended sentences."

Brod also questioned why the criminal case against Farber was opened by the Federal Security Service when "it is not in their jurisdiction."

Farber pleaded not guilty, saying that Gosstroi-1 had returned him the money he had invested in the club's renovation after the contractor complained that it had not received financing from authorities on time. The teacher said he had earned the money while working as an apartment designer.

The council will convene on Aug. 22 to discuss measures to examine the case, such as asking the Supreme Court and the Prosecutor General to look into possible violations in the trial or conducting an evaluation by experts.

Farber was first convicted of the crime in the summer of 2011 by the Tver Region court, which sentenced him to eight years in prison and a 3.2 million ruble fine. The Supreme Court later overturned the regional court's ruling and sent the case to the Ostashkov town court for a new trial.

Moshenka village residents told Komsomolskaya Pravda last August that Farber dated local administration head Lyubov Valeyeva, who was earlier courted by a local Federal Security Service officer. It is believed that one of Valeyeva's ill wishers replaced Farber as the club director after he was arrested.

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