

Environmental Activist Jailed for Public Swearing Ahead of Sochi Games

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Yevgeny Vitishko has been found guilty of swearing in public.

An activist who has protested the environmental damage wreaked by preparations for the Sochi Winter Olympics has been found guilty of swearing in public and sentenced to 15 days in prison, a news report said.

The case reportedly lasted no longer than four minutes before the judge handed down a sentence to Yevgeny Vitishko on Monday, The Associated Press reported, citing another activist who attended the trial, Valery Khachatryan.

The judge refused to summon a key witness whose claim that Vitishko had been swearing at a bus stop had led to the activist's arrest, the report said.

Vitishko was expected to present a new environmental report during the Olympics, which begin on Friday, but the verdict means that he will likely stay behind bars for much of the

Games.

Vitishko had earlier received a three-year, suspended prison sentence for "deliberate destruction of property" for spray-painting the word "thief" on the fence around the residence of Krasnodar region Governor Alexander Tkachyov. In his defense Vitishko said that the property was built in a national forest where construction is forbidden.

The suspended sentence barred him from traveling, but Vitishko had just filed a formal petition to go to Sochi and was about to depart for the Olympic city from the town of Tuapse, 70 kilometers away, when he was detained for supposedly swearing at a bus stop, his lawyer, Alexander Popkov, said.

Human rights groups condemned the arrest as the latest incident in a series of persecutions ahead of the Games.

Amnesty International's deputy chief of Europe and Central Asia programs, Denis Krivosheyev, said Vitishko has been "punished" for trying to expose the environmental damage caused by a flurry of construction ahead of the Games, Reuters reported.

"Vitishko's name has now become synonymous with harassment of civil society activists in the run-up to the Sochi Games," Krivosheyev said.

Human Rights Watch, Greenpeace Russia, the Khimki Forest Movement and the Ecological Watch for the North Caucasus have all lobbied for Vitishko's acquittal on the earlier, property damage charges, saying that Russian officials had punished him for criticizing the Games.

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