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Man Found Guilty, Sentenced for Murder That Sparked Moscow Ethnic Riots

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Orkhan Zeinalov

A man suspected of having committed a murder that launched a flurry of ethnic riots in Moscow last fall was handed a guilty verdict and a 17-year prison sentence on Monday.

The Moscow City Court convicted Azerbaijan national Orkhan Zeinalov of having killed Yegor Shcherbakov following a verbal altercation on Oct. 10, 2013, ITAR-Tass reported Monday. Zeinalov had maintained his innocence throughout the trial despite having initially admitted his guilt in part.

The verdict hinged on the conclusion that Zeinalov's testimony regarding his whereabouts at the time of the murder was contradictory. Footage shot by a nearby surveillance camera indicated his presence at the scene of the crime when the murder was committed, the court found, according to the Caucasian Knot news portal.

Despite a request by prosecutors that Zeinalov receive an 18-year prison sentence, he was given a term of 17 years in a high-security penal colony.

The court also ordered Zeinalov to pay out 3 million rubles ($85,000) in damages to Vladimir Shcherbakov, the victim's father, as part of a civil lawsuit. Shcherbakov had sought 5 million rubles.

Shcherbakov's death triggered a wave of nationalist sentiment in Moscow's southern Biryulyovo district last fall.

Residents reacted to the killing with outrage, storming a local shopping center where many migrant workers were known to be employed and demanding the closure of the vegetable warehouse where Zeinalov had worked. Authorities responded to the public outcry by launching a police raid on the market, which resulted in numerous detentions over migration violations.

Zeinalov initially fled the city, but was apprehended days later in the Moscow region city of Kolomna.

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