

Siberian Official Who Killed Journalist Seeks Compensation for Ruined Vacation

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Gennady Zhigaryov

A former Siberian official sentenced to probation after stabbing a journalist to death is suing for damages after his vacation was ruined by the case, a local reporter has said.

Gennady Zhigaryov, a former deputy mayor of Tulun, in the Irkutsk region, was given a 22-month probation for killing journalist Alexander Khodzinsky in mid-2012. In a further twist, an Irkutsk court lifted that sentence in October, local NewsBabr portal reported.

But the court has ordered Zhigaryov to pay 1 million rubles (\$14,372) in compensation to his victim's widow, Galina — and it was attempts to enforce this ruling that prompted Zhigaryov's latest legal action, journalist Galina Solonina said Tuesday on her Facebook page.

Zhigaryov, who was planning to take a holiday abroad with his wife, was turned back

at passport control after officials banned him from leaving the country for failing to make compensation payments under a court-sanctioned installment plan, Solonina said via Facebook.

The installment plan was arranged because the couple's assets, including "cars, apartments, shops, land plots and so on" were registered in his wife's name, while Zhigaryov's only official source of income was his meager government pension, Solonina said.

"Now Zhigaryov is trying to sue for the damages he sustained in connection with his disrupted holiday," she said in her Facebook post. "Life is hard these days for pensioners!"

Zhigaryov was scheduled to appear in court on Wednesday to argue his case, Solonina said, adding: "This is all turning into some insane farce."

The Prosecutor General's office is seeking a retrial in the killing case, arguing that the sentence was inappropriately lenient and asking an Irkutsk court to send the case back to investigators, NewsBabr reported Tuesday.

In the original verdict, the court ruled that Zhigaryov had acted in the "state of affectation," or extreme emotional disturbance, when he killed the veteran reporter who had investigated local officials' corruption.

Zhigaryov had driven to the journalist's summer home in the countryside, and stabbed him during an argument, according to court materials and media reports.

Additional doubts about the court's ruling were stoked by the facts that psychiatrists who examined Zhigaryov had initially ruled out the "affectation" diagnosis, NewsBabr reported.

Media watchdog group Reporters Without Borders and the Irkutsk region's human rights ombudsman Valery Lukin have condemned the attack.

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