The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Opposition Activist Flees to Ukraine

By Gabrielle Tetrault-Farber

February 15, 2015



Pavel Shekhtman

A Russian political activist facing jail time on extremism charges announced over the weekend that he has escaped house arrest in Moscow and fled to Ukraine, where he aspires to become a government official.

Pavel Shekhtman — who had been under house since last week — was charged with extremism in October based on allegations that he had called for the killing of a journalist. Under Russian law, individuals convicted of extremism can face up to five years in prison.

After Andrei Stenin, a photojournalist for state-run RIA Novosti news agency went missing while covering the conflict in east Ukraine last summer, Shekhtman wrote a Facebook post calling on the Ukrainian authorities to execute Stenin upon finding him.

The photographer was confirmed dead the following month. He is believed to have been killed

in early August when the convoy he was traveling in came under heavy fire.

Shekhtman, a virulent critic of Russia's stance on Ukraine and Crimea, had written the post prior to finding out that Stenin had been killed. The Facebook post has since been deleted.

"I have finally broken free of the vicious Russian cycle in which it is impossible to do anything and impossible not to do something," Shekhtman wrote on Facebook on Sunday, with reference to his arrival in Ukraine. "I live in a lively society that creates its own history!"

Fellow activist Vladimir Malyshev wrote Saturday on Facebook that he had played a "small role in saving" Shekhtman but did not elaborate on how he assisted the activist in fleeing Russia.

Shekhtman, who runs a blog at beleaguered opposition site Grani.ru, has also remained silent about the details surrounding his escape.

On Saturday night, Shekhtman tweeted that he had just been hired by Censor.net, a pro-Ukrainian news site, but that his sights were set on becoming a Ukrainian government official. He also wrote that he had entered Ukraine with "two suitcases of compromising information" that he vowed to publish on Censor.net.

Shekhtman has been detained more than 40 times during Russian opposition protests, according to Grani.ru.

Contact the author at g.tetraultfarber@imedia.ru

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/02/15/russian-opposition-activist-flees-to-ukraine-a43903