Communist Activist Gets Into a Coffin to Protest Low Pensions in Russia (Video)

By Anna Dolgov

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Mikhail Abramyan

A court in southern Russia has ordered a Communist activist to pay a 20,000 ruble ($347) fine for a creative protest on Monday in Stavropol in which he demanded higher pensions for retirees, news reports said.

Mikhail Abramyan, head of the Communists of Russia political movement in the Krasnodar region, laid down in a coffin in the central square of Stavropol to draw attention to the challenges facing older Russians living on a fixed income amid the country's economic downturn.

Abramyan lay in the coffin, flanked by a funeral wreath, outside the local legislature while holding a sign that read: "We will defend the rights of our elders until we are carried away in caskets," according to photos and videos posted online.

"We wanted to show that if prices increase, and pensions do not, then soon everybody will end up in similar coffins," Abramyan was quoted as saying by the Bloknot news portal.

Abramyan also wore an orange-and-black St. George's ribbon, which has come to symbolize support for the Kremlin and its policies.

The protest went on for approximately half an hour until police arrived, dismantled the set and took Abramyan into custody, Bloknot reported.

Police also detained a second member of the Communists of Russia movement, Dmitry Pechyorsky, who stood nearby during the protest and was summoned as a witness during the court hearing, the OVDInfo news portal reported.

Communists of Russia said it would appeal the verdict, arguing that Abramyan's action was a one-man rally and therefore exempt from a ban on unauthorized protests under Russian law, according to OVDInfo.

"The trial against Mikhail was absurd," Pechyorsky was quoted as saying by OVDInfo. "As far as I understand, he was accused of being not alone in the coffin during his action. But photo and video evidence exists of his one-man picket at the regional Duma."

Watch Abramyan's protest here: