The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Bakers Sentenced to Hard Time for Selling Opium-Laced Buns

By Jennifer Monaghan

July 08, 2015



The drugs were allegedly sold in the form of buns laced with the poppy mix, the Novaya Gazeta newspaper reported.

Four members of a family of bakers in the southern city of Voronezh have been sentenced to upward of eight years in prison each for having allegedly sold poppy-seed buns laced with opium out of their cafe in a case defendants maintain was contrived by law enforcement officers looking to make a buck, Russian media reported.

Alexander Polukhin, Maria and Yevgenia Polukhina and Nina Chursina were given a range of sentences Tuesday reaching up to 8 1/2 years each after a district court found them guilty of large-scale drug sales and intent to sell, the Regional Prosecutors' Office said in an online statement.

Prosecutors successfully argued that between 2009 and March 2010, the Polukhins and Chursina sold poppy straw, poppy seeds and opium mix out of their Ochag (Hearth) cafe

in Voronezh, as well as in other districts of the city, the statement said.

The drugs were allegedly sold in the form of buns laced with the poppy mix, the Novaya Gazeta newspaper reported.

Drug control officers allegedly found 4.8 tons of opium, poppy seed and poppy straw mix after carrying out a raid of properties owned and rented by the defendants, according to the statement by the prosecutors' office.

The Polukhins and Chursina, who is Maria Polukhina's sister, continue to deny their guilt, saying they were set up by the drugs service after refusing to pay protection money of 50,000 rubles ($875) a month to the officers, the Komsomolskaya Pravda daily reported.

They defendants have 10 days to appeal the verdict, according to the Regional Prosecutors' Office.

The case has sparked controversy in Russia, with some arguing that the family was wrongfully accused of misusing edible poppy products.

A Change.org petition addressed to President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev referred to the charges against the family as "absurd" and called for the "adoption of amendments to the legislation that would preclude the possibility of prosecuting businessmen for using poppy as a food." The petition had received upward of 1,500 signatures by Wednesday evening.

Contact the author at j.monaghan@imedia.ru

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/07/08/russian-bakers-sentenced-to-hard-time-for-selling-opium-laced-buns-a47998