

Russian Shock Artist Pavlensky Denied Bail, Asks to Be Charged With Terrorism

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Pyotr Pavlensky

A Moscow court has ordered performance artist Pyotr Pavlensky to remain in detention until early December for setting fire to the main entrance of Russia's security service's headquarters, the TASS news agency reported.

The court on Tuesday evening denied a request from Pavlensky's lawyer, Olga Chavdar, to release the artist on bail or put him under house arrest, arguing he was a flight risk, the report said Tuesday.

Pavlensky, who gained worldwide fame for nailing his scrotum to Moscow's iconic Red Square in November 2013, set fire to the main entrance of the Federal Security Service's headquarters in central Moscow's Lubyanskaya Ploshchad in the early hours of Monday.

The 31-year-old St. Petersburg native made no attempt to flee the scene and was detained. He was later charged with vandalism, a charge that carries a sentence of up to three years in prison.

Chavdar told the court the “stunt was aimed at helping society understand the situation in Russia,” TASS reported.

In court on Tuesday, Pavlensky asked investigators to change the charge from vandalism to the much weightier charge of terrorism, arguing that others who had committed similar acts had been judged under that offense.

The artist was presumably referring to Ukrainian filmmaker Oleg Sentsov and activist Alexander Kolchenko, who earlier this year were sentenced to 20 and 10 years in prison respectively for their roles in the setting on fire of two Crimean premises to protest its annexation by Russia last year. One of the targeted premises belonged to the United Russia ruling party.

Pavlensky threatened to remain mute until the charge was changed, the report said.

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