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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Former Yaroslavl Mayor Urlashov Jailed for 12 Years

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Moskva News Agency

The former mayor of Yaroslavl has been sentenced to 12 and a half years in prison on corruption charges, the Interfax news agency reported Wednesday.

Evgeny Urlashov, who was elected as mayor of the central Russian city in April 2012, was also fined 42 million rubles ($630,000) by the court.

Urlashov, 49, had been found guilty of extorting a 17 million ruble bribe ($2.5 million) from a local businessman.

His advisor Alexei Lopatin was also found guilty of bribery and sentenced to 7 years in prison. Deputy Mayor Dmitry Donskoy, who was also implicated in the case, was acquitted of all charges.

Urlashov has repeatedly denied committing the crime and claimed that his case was political. At the time of his arrest, Urlashov was the only opposition mayor of a large Russian city.

"The judge was specifically cruel," Urlashov's lawyer, Ksenia Karpinskaya, told The Moscow Times. "Criminals get lesser sentences for crimes involving real violence. My client got 12 and a half years for a bribe which he never saw and has never been proved."

Elected during the wave of opposition protests in Moscow, Urlashov managed to hold this post for just over a year. Shortly before his arrest, he had announced plans to run for governor of the Yaroslavl Region.

Urlashov's arrest and prosecution is far from a unique case in modern Russia. Since Putin returned to the presidency in 2012, Russia has arrested, detained or interrogated the mayors of more than 25 cities.

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