

Putin Rejects Plea to Free Jailed Ukrainian Filmmaker

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Ukrainian film director Oleg Sentsov watches from a defendants' box as he attends a court hearing in Rostov-on-Don, Russia. **Sergey Pivovarov / Reuters**

Russian President Vladimir Putin has rebuffed a request to free imprisoned Ukrainian film director Oleg Sentsov, saying the court must decide Sentsov's fate.

During a meeting of the Presidential Council on Culture and Art, the Russian film director Alexander Sokurov [asked](#) Putin to free Sentsov.

Sokurov described the imprisoned director as an “emotional and simple young man who could not understand the intricacies of [the Ukrainian] conflict.”

Putin replied that Sentsov had not been convicted for his art or opinions, but because he had, “dedicated his life to terrorist activities.”

“We live in a law-based society in which these kinds of questions must be resolved by the legal system,” Putin said.

In Aug. 2015, Sentsov was convicted of preparing a series of explosions and arson attacks in Simferopol, the capital of the disputed Crimea region, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in March 2014.

Amnesty International are among human rights organisation to call foul on the trial. In Aug. 2015, the group said that evidence used against Sentsov may have been extracted “under duress.”

“We have serious concerns about fundamental flaws in this trial,” Amnesty Researcher Heather Gill said at the time.

A North Caucasus regional military court sentenced Sentsov to 20 years in a maximum security prison colony. Alexander Kolchenko, Sentsov’s alleged accomplice, was sentenced to ten years in prison.

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