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The World's 'Last Soviet Citizen' Is a Stateless Ex-Con Locked Up in Russia

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AP Photo / John McConnico

A court in Yekaterinburg has ruled that a former convict with a Soviet passport should remain imprisoned in the city's migration detention center until May.

Vasily Babina, 58, was sentenced to death by firing squad for robbery, burglary, and murder, and he was on death row when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. Six years later, when the Russian government suspended the use of the death penalty, a court commuted Babina's sentence to 26 years, factoring in time already served. In February 2017, he was finally released.

Thanks the disappearance of his home country while behind bars, however, Babina emerged from prison with only a Soviet passport, the E1.RU news site reported.

A court in Yekaterinburg has ruled that Babina is now a "stateless person" and should be detained in a migration center with other foreigners illegally in Russia.

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Russian officials hope to deport Babina to his Soviet birthplace in modern-day Kazakhstan, whose authorities have been asked to confirm his Kazakh citizenship.

Meanwhile, activists are campaigning to overturn the decision and reunite Babina with his relatives in the Russian region of Altai.

“The Ministry of Justice has decreed that it does not want Vasily Babina to remain in Russia,” the man's lawyer, Roman Kachanov, told E1.RU. “They haven’t explained why.”

On May 28, the court is expected to consider extending Babina's detention.

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