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The Russian Woman Convicted of Treason for Texting a Friend Says She Loves Putin

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Oksana Sevastidi **AP Photo / Ivan Sekretarev**

Oksana Sevastidi loves her president. "He's always making magnanimous gestures, and he is helping Ukraine and Syria," she told journalist Daniil Turovksy, in an interview on Wednesday with the news site Meduza.

Earlier this month, President Putin pardoned Sevastidi, who was convicted in 2015 of high treason and sentenced to seven years in prison for sending two text messages to a friend in Georgia, showing Russian military equipment in transit.

On Wednesday, Russia's Supreme Court symbolically reduced her sentence to three years.

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Sevastidi told Meduza that she doesn't hold Putin responsible for the judicial system that sent her to prison in the first place. "Under Stalin they said the same thing. [...] But Stalin didn't know about all the verdicts," she explained.

Now that she's out of prison, Sevastidi is free to return to her 70-year-old mother, who relies on her care. "He saved me and he saved my mother's life," Sevastidi said of Putin's pardon, telling Meduza that she'd like to thank the president in person, and tell him about other people wrongly imprisoned for treason, she says.

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Sevastidi also revealed that she remains a member of United Russia, the country's longtime ruling political party: "I joined back when I worked at the marketplace. Everybody from work went together and joined. I don't think they're responsible for any of what happened to me."

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