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Gay Uzbek Journalist Facing Deportation Attempts Suicide in Detention

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Ali Feruz / Facebook

The chief editor of Russian investigative newspaper Novaya Gazeta has appealed to the journalistic community and President Vladimir Putin to prevent the deportation of one of the newspaper's journalists to Uzbekistan where he could face persecution from authorities.

A Moscow court ruled on Tuesday that the openly gay Uzbek journalist writing for Novaya Gazeta under the pen name Ali Feruz had violated Russian immigration laws and would be deported.

In the video appeal uploaded to YouTube, Dmitry Muratov said, "Maybe the government can help a person who can't solve a problem like this on their own? Maybe it exists for this very reason?"

The journalist Khudoberdi Nurmatov reportedly tried to commit suicide on Aug. 2 while in detention, one of his lawyers Philip Shipov told the state-run TASS news agency.

Daniel Haimovich, another of the journalist's lawyers, said Nurmatov attempted suicide to avoid being sent to the detention center where he is currently being held. "He was hoping to wind up in the hospital where he would feel safe," the lawyer told TASS.

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Moscow police detained Nurmatov on Tuesday during a document check in front of the newspaper's offices. He can appeal his deportation ruling.

Russian media reports that Nurmatov fears his open sexual orientation could pose a threat on his return to Uzbekistan, where homosexuality is a punishable offense.

Nurmatov, who has no official identity documents, had applied for asylum in Russia, but his request was refused.

This is not Nurmatov's first detention by police. In March, he was taken into custody, following a request from Uzbekistan's security services, Novaya Gazeta previously reported.

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