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Russian Court Overturns Order to Deport Gay Journalist to Uzbekistan

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Journalist Ali Feruz **Alexandr Avilov / Moskva New Agency**

The Moscow City Court on Tuesday canceled plans to deport the gay Uzbek journalist Khudoberdi Nurmatov, following outcry from human rights defenders.

Nurmatov, who writes under the pen name Ali Feruz for the investigative Novaya Gazeta newspaper, was detained in early August. The Basmanny Court recently ruled he would be deported to Uzbekistan for violating migration rules.

The move caused alarm among human rights defenders who argued Nurmatov was facing almost certain imprisonment in Uzbekistan, where homosexuality is a punishable offense. The journalist reportedly attempted to commit suicide while in detention.

Last week, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) said it would be illegal for Nurmatov to be deported, until the Court had reviewed his case.

The Moscow Court on Tuesday cited the ruling as influencing its decision to halt Nurmatov's

deportation, the RBC news outlet reported from the courtroom. In the meantime, Nurmatov will be held in Moscow's Sakharovo special detention center for foreign citizens, RBC reports.

The Moscow court's decision was not a given. According to a Russian law passed in 2015, the country's Constitutional Court is allowed to overturn ECHR rulings.

Moscow police detained Nurmatov on Aug. 1 during a routine document check near the Novaya Gazeta newspaper's office.

Nurmatov, who has no official identity documents since 2012, had applied for asylum in Russia, but his request was refused.

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