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Crimea Journalist Handed Suspended Sentence on Separatism Charges

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Nikolai Semena (Krim Realii / Youtube)

A journalist from the Ukrainian news service Radio Svoboda has received a suspended sentence of two and a half years on charges of inciting separatism in annexed Crimea, the Krym.Realii news website reported Friday.

Nikolai Semena was charged with inciting separatism in April 2016 over a publication on Krym.Realii that allegedly called for violating Russia's territorial integrity.

Then-Prosecutor General of Crimea Natalya Poklonskaya accused the news service of providing "justification for acts of sabotage and extremism."

A court in the city of Simferopol sentenced Semena to three years probation in addition to the suspended sentence on Friday, according to Krym.Realii.

Semena maintains he exercised his right to free expression in his publications, Krym.Realii reported. In closing arguments, he warned that a guilty verdict would affect the state of

journalism throughout Russia.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty president Thomas Kent condemned the court ruling against Semena as a crackdown on independent voices in Crimea in a filmed statement.

Radio Svoboda (Radio Liberty) launched the Krym.Realii service following Russia's annexation of the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine in 2014.

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