

Russian Ex-Governor Sentenced to 8 Years on Bribery Charges

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Nikita Belykh **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

The liberal ex-governor of the Kirov region in central Russia has been sentenced to 8 years in prison for accepting a bribe in a case he has labeled absurd.

Nikita Belykh was charged with accepting a 600,000 euro (\$746,500) bribe in three instalments between 2012 and 2016 to [protect](#) the interests of a ski factory and forest management company based in Kirov. He has pleaded innocent to the charges and said he was the victim of a setup.

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“Despite the defendant’s position, his guilt is established,” Moscow’s Presnensky district court judge Tatyana Vasyuchenko was cited as saying by the Mediazona news website.

Belykh was delivered to the court in Moscow on Thursday from the hospital accompanied

by a doctor who performed regular check-ups of his health throughout the 9-hour-long trial.

Prosecutors had requested for Belykh to be sentenced to 10 years in jail, fined 100 million rubles (\$1.8 million) and barred from holding public office for eight years. The ex-governor called the charges “absurd” when the trial [opened](#) last fall and [asked](#) the judge to acquit him last month, Mediazona reported.

The court ruled to sentence Belykh to 8 years in jail and issued a fine of 48 million rubles (\$860,000).

Belykh’s lawyer said that an appeal would be filed against the verdict and that the defendant would “keep fighting,” the state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported Friday.

Belykh was appointed as the governor of the Kirov region by President Dmitry Medvedev a decade ago, drawing criticism from fellow liberal politicians for “selling his soul to the devil,” Newsweek [reported](#) at the time.

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