

Hunger Striking Crimean Activist Sentenced to Extra Prison Time

July 06, 2018



Volodymyr Balukh, the incarcerated Crimean activist. **Twitter**

A hunger striking Crimean activist detained by Russian authorities has reportedly been sentenced on a second set of charges for assaulting a prison guard.

Volodymyr Balukh, a farmer who opposed Russia's annexation of the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine, is serving three years and 7 months in a prison in Crimea on arms possession charges. Balukh launched an [indefinite hunger strike](#) more than 100 days ago to protest new charges against him.

A Russian-run court in Crimea gave Balukh a sentence of up to five years in a remote penal colony, and a fine of 10,000 rubles (\$158), for disrupting the work of a correctional facility, the Krym.Realii news website [reported Thursday](#).

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“[Balukh acted with] an enmity for the current system of government, confirmed by earlier committed crimes,” the judge’s verdict said, according to Krym.Realii.

The original sentence for arms possession against Balukh was dropped by the Supreme Court of Crimea in October 2017, but then upheld by a lower court. In August 2017, a warden at the penal colony where Balukh is being held pressed assault charges against him, claiming that Balukh attacked the prison official.

The human rights group Memorial has recognized Balukh as a political prisoner, and believes the weapons charges against him stem from his pro-Ukrainian stance.

Balukh reportedly expressed solidarity with demonstrations against Russia’s annexation of Crimea by hanging a Ukrainian flag and leaving it draped outside his Crimean home well after the peninsula was annexed in early 2014.

Original url:

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