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Russia Jails First FSB Officer on Torture Charges, Experts Say

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Alexander Nekrasov / TASS

A former Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) official has been jailed for four years in what experts say is the country's first conviction on torture charges against a security official.

Recent polling has said that one in 10 Russians have been subjected to what they perceived to be torture by law enforcement officials. The United Nations last year called on Russia to halt the frequent torture of detainees amid several high-profile scandals in the country's prison system.

Related article: Russia's Torture Complaints Doubled Since 2018, Rights Official Says

The Leningrad region military court on Friday found ex-FSB officer Ilya Kirsanov guilty of abusing his powers and causing serious bodily harm. Kirsanov was ordered to compensate his victim, businessman Igor Salikov, $10,800 for sexually assaulting Salikov with his weapon and causing internal injuries during searches in 2018.

Kirsanov, whose contract with the FSB expired in June and was not extended, pleaded not guilty and maintained that Salikov's injuries were self-inflicted.

Salikov is in pre-trial detention on charges of sexual assault.

Friday's conviction is the first known torture sentence handed down to a current or former FSB official, according to Salikov's lawyer Pavel Yasman and experts interviewed by Russian media.

Related article: 1 in 10 Russians Have Been Tortured by Authorities – Poll

Russia's Committee Against Torture was unable to find previous convictions of an FSB officer on the same charges, the NGO's Moscow branch told the Vedomosti business daily.

"Unlike the police who are easier to prosecute, the torture case against an FSB officer sets a precedent in Russia," Tatyana Glushkova, a lawyer who works for the Memorial human rights organization, told the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper last month.

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