

Jailed Russian Actor Released Ahead of Appeal After Moscow Protest Verdicts Spark Outcry

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Pavel Ustinov **Sergei Fadeichev / TASS**

A Moscow court has ruled to release novice actor Pavel Ustinov from custody days ahead of his appeal following widespread public outcry over his conviction.

Ustinov, 23, was found guilty Monday of dislocating a riot police officer's shoulder during mass anti-government protests in Moscow last month. A court sentenced Ustinov to three and a half years in prison despite his claims that he was a bystander in the Aug. 3 marches for fair elections.

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The Moscow City Court ordered to release Ustinov on bail, granting the prosecutors' request filed the previous evening, the Mediazona news website [reported](#) Friday. Prosecutors still

believe he is guilty, but have asked the court to change the final verdict and to punish him less severely.

Ustinov is due to appeal his conviction at a court hearing on Thursday.

Ustinov is one of several people jailed for three to four years over a series of political protests that flared this summer when opposition candidates were barred from taking part in a local election in Moscow.

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The actor's case struck a nerve with the public and celebrities, who have taken to social media and held single pickets this week to call for his release. The conviction was also condemned by a senior official in the ruling United Russia party, as well as a prominent pro-Kremlin state television presenter.

Thousands of Russians from different walks of life have signed open letters calling for the defendants in the so-called "Moscow case" to be released and their charges dropped, marking a rare display of unity among the country's civil society.

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