Russian Jury Acquits Gay Man's Murder Suspect

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The knife attack was "most likely due to sexual orientation," the victim's boyfriend who survived the attack said. **Artyom Geodakyzn / TASS**

A Moscow jury has acquitted a man accused of killing a gay man last year, the LGBT rights group Stimul [reported](#) Thursday.

Security cameras [captured](#) 40-year-old Roman Yedalov's stabbing death near central Moscow's Kursky train station in June 2019. His boyfriend Yevgeny Yefimov, who survived the attack, recounted that the suspect had shouted homophobic slurs.

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Jurors found Anton Berezhnyi not guilty of murder, which would have resulted in a prison sentence of up to 15 years, Stimul said.

They found Berezhnyi guilty on a lesser charge of battery, which carries a two-year prison

sentence, the Mediazona news website [reported](#).

A Basmanny district court judge is due to deliver a verdict in the coming days, which Stimul said its legal team plans to appeal.

Berezhnyi partially admitted his guilt, the rights group said.

"He said that [Yedalov] fell on the knife," Stimul spokesperson Sergei Romanovsky [told](#) Mediazona.

The independent Dozhd news channel [reported](#) that Yedalov was killed and Yefimov was injured on their way home from a gay club.

The knife attack was "most likely due to sexual orientation," Yefimov [told](#) Dozhd.

Berezhnyi's acquittal comes a day after a prominent watchdog noted that the number of hate crimes against members of Russia's LGBT community [increased](#) in 2019.

Activists tie the rise in violence to Russia's 2013 law banning "gay propaganda among minors" and anti-LGBT rhetoric on state television.

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