

Prominent Russian Political Scientist Gets 5-Year Suspended Sentence

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Nikolai Platoshkin's allies say the charges against him were trumped up in order to shut him out of this fall's parliamentary elections. **Sergei Fadeichev / TASS**

A Moscow court has handed prominent political scientist and academic Nikolai Platoshkin a five-year suspended sentence on charges of “inciting unrest,” the state-run RIA Novosti news agency [reported](#) Wednesday.

Platoshkin, a former diplomat at the Russian Embassy in Germany who heads the For New Socialism movement, is also a popular YouTube blogger who has openly criticized last year's constitutional amendments and the pro-Kremlin United Russia party. His allies claim the charges against him were trumped-up in order to keep him from running in this fall's parliamentary elections.

In its verdict, Moscow's Gagarinsky District Court said Platoshkin spread fake information on his YouTube channel by criticizing the Russian authorities for what he called ineffective measures to protect the public from Covid-19. He then called on people to resist these anti-coronavirus measures.

The court found him guilty of inciting people to riot, saying he was “disguising his calls as an incentive for peaceful rallies.”

He has also been fined 700,000 rubles (\$9,500) on charges of spreading false information.

State prosecutors had [requested](#) a sentence of 6 years in prison for the “inciting riots” charge and a fine of 500,000 rubles for the spreading false information charge.

Platoshkin denied his guilt on both charges.

His suspended sentence comes ahead of this September’s high-stakes State Duma election and amid a widening crackdown on Russia’s opposition.

Yevgeny Stupin, a member of the Moscow City Duma from the Communist Party, told The Moscow Times that United Russia is trying to block “any semi-dangerous candidates” in an effort to hold onto its majority in the State Duma.

“They are accusing him of inciting mass riots, but there were no riots,” he said.

The academic was charged and put under house arrest last summer after he drew attention for criticizing Russia’s constitutional amendments that give President Vladimir Putin the ability to stay in power until 2036.

Platoshkin told RIA Novosti that he plans to appeal the sentence.

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