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Russia's Supreme Court Rejects Hearing on Gulag Historian's Case

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Yuri Dmitriyev, the head of the Karelia Memorial historical society. **Igor Podgorny / TASS**

Russia's Supreme Court has declined to hear an appeal from prominent gulag historian Yury Dmitriyev, who has been jailed twice on charges of sexually abusing his adopted daughter, the court said Tuesday.

Dmitriyev, 65, is currently serving 13 years in prison following a prosecution that critics say is politically motivated and based on fabricated evidence. Dmitriyev denies the charges against him.

The historian is lauded for his work uncovering mass graves and identifying thousands of victims of Soviet repressions in northwestern Russia's Karelia region.

Related article: A Gulag Historian Returns to Prison

In an open letter published this summer, more than 150 cultural and scientific figures had

asked Russia's Supreme Court chairman Vyacheslav Lebedev to review Dmitriyev's case.

But the court said Tuesday that it had refused to take a hearing on the case, which will now remain under the purview of local courts in Petrozavodsk, the capital of the Karelia region.

"This is another blow to justice," activist Zoya Svetova wrote on Facebook. Dmitriyev is facing the prospect of an even longer prison sentence as prosecutors are pursuing more charges of a similar kind against the historian in what could become a third conviction, Svetova added.

Dmitriyev was first arrested on charges of producing child pornography in 2016 — charges which shocked his friends, colleagues and wider civil society, who said the case was political retribution for Dmitriyev's work uncovering Soviet-era mass graves.

He was acquitted in spring 2018, only to have a second criminal case opened against him a few months later. He was first convicted to three-and-a-half years in prison — a term which was then extended to 13 years shortly before his scheduled release.

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