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Russian Soldier Pleads Guilty at Kyiv War Crimes Trial

By AFP

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Vadim Shishimarin. **Volodymyr Zolkin / YouTube.com**

The first Russian soldier on trial in Ukraine for war crimes during Moscow's invasion pleaded guilty on Wednesday, facing possible life imprisonment in Kyiv.

Asked in court if he was guilty of the allegations, including war crimes and premeditated murder, 21-year-old sergeant Vadim Shishimarin responded "yes."

The captured soldier is accused of killing a 62-year-old civilian in northeast Ukraine in the first days of the Kremlin's offensive.

Shishimarin — from the Siberian region of Irkutsk — sat in the glass defendant's box in a Kyiv district court, wearing a blue and grey hoodie.

The youthful-looking soldier with a shaved head looked towards the ground as a prosecutor read out charges against him in Ukrainian.

An interpreter was translating for him into Russian.

Shishimarin is accused of killing the civilian — allegedly on a bicycle — near the village of Chupakhivka in the eastern Sumy region on Feb. 28.

Ukraine says Shishimarin was commanding a unit in a tank division when his convoy came under attack.

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According to prosecutors, he and four other soldiers stole a car, and as they travelled near the village they encountered the civilian on a bicycle.

Shishimarin was told to kill the civilian and used a Kalashnikov assault rifle to do so, prosecutors said.

The next hearing in the case will take place Thursday at 09:00 GMT.

Prosecutor Andriy Sinyuk told reporters after Wednesday's hearing that two witnesses — including one of the Russian soldiers who was with Shishimarin at the time of the incident — will be brought to testify in court.

The soldier's weapon will also be examined as part of the probe, he said.

The Kremlin earlier said it was not informed about the case, saying Moscow's "ability to provide assistance due to the lack of our diplomatic mission there is also very limited."

The trial will be rapidly followed by others, with another two Russian soldiers expected to go on trial in central Ukraine on Thursday.

Kyiv says it has opened thousands of ongoing cases into alleged crimes committed by Moscow's forces since their invasion launched on Feb. 24.

The cases will test the Ukrainian justice system at a time when international institutions are conducting their own investigations into abuses allegedly committed by Russian forces.

Kyiv says it has thousands of ongoing cases and dozens of suspects, vowing to bring them to justice.

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