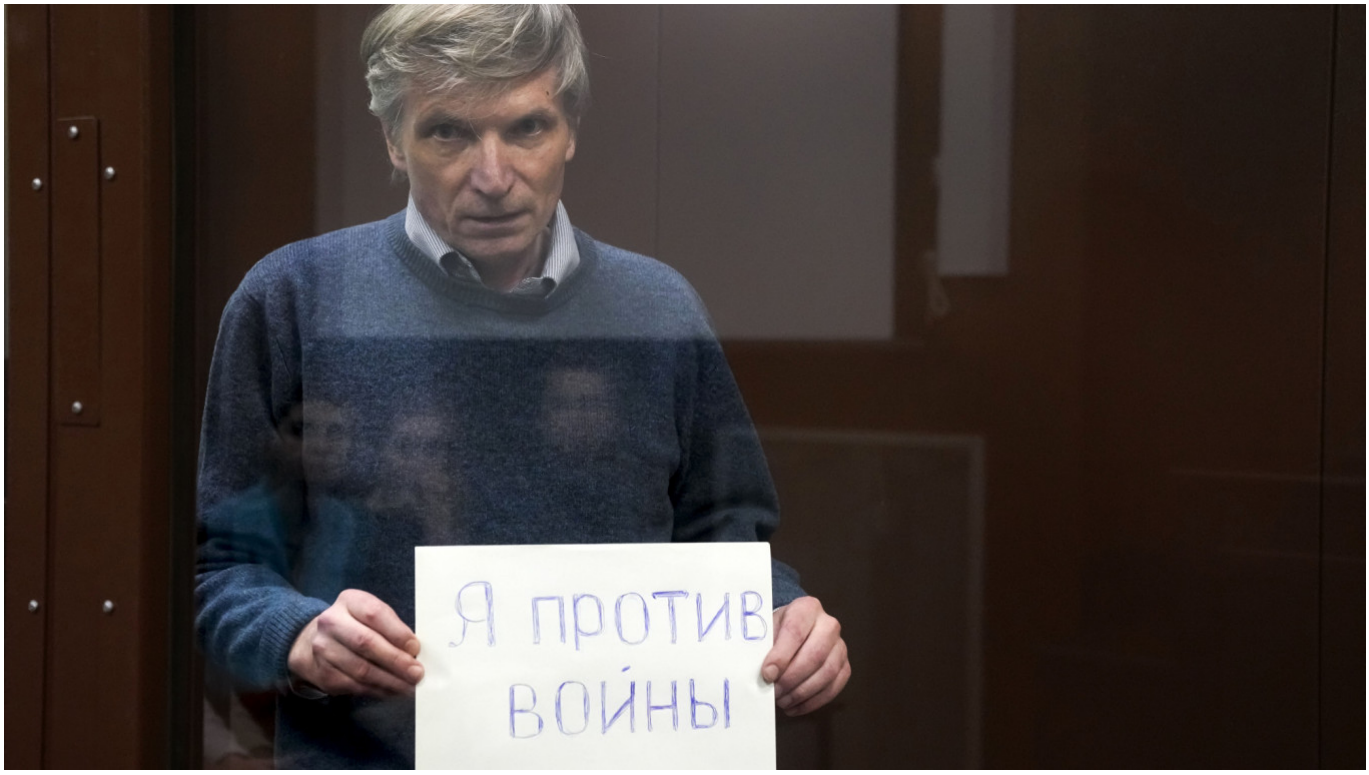
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Prosecutor Seeks 7 Years in Jail for Councillor Over Ukraine Criticism

By AFP

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Alexei Gorinov holds a sign that reads "I am against the war" in the defendant's cage during a June 21 court hearing in Moscow. **AP / TASS**

A Russian prosecutor on Thursday requested a seven-year prison term for a Moscow city councillor accused of criticizing Russia's military intervention in Ukraine.

Alexei Gorinov, a 60-year-old lawyer by training, was arrested in late April for spreading "knowingly false information" about the Russian army and is now on trial.

Gorinov is the first elected member of the opposition to face jail for criticizing Moscow' military campaign in Ukraine.

The charges come under new legislation that allows prison time for discrediting the Russian military and is part of Moscow's increasing efforts to snuff out the last vestiges of dissent.

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Speaking in Moscow's Meshchansky District Court, the prosecutor accused Gorinov of undermining the "authority of the Armed Forces" and being guided by "political hatred," an AFP journalist said.

Gorinov spoke up against Moscow's military intervention in Ukraine during a work meeting in March that was recorded on video and is available on YouTube.

During his speech, he questioned plans for an art competition for children in his constituency while "every day children are dying" in Ukraine.

On Thursday, several dozen people came out to support Gorinov, including his wife and sister.

Dmitry Fyodorov, a 50-year-old programmer, said that the charges against Gorinov were "unlawful" and described him as a "kind man and a good lawyer."

Russian society is reeling from a historic crackdown on dissent which has intensified since President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine on Feb. 24.

Criticism of Russia's military intervention in Ukraine has essentially been banned in the country.

In March, Russia passed into law prison sentences of up to 15 years for spreading false information aimed at discrediting its military forces.

On Wednesday, parliament introduced harsh prison terms for calls to act against national security and criminal liability for maintaining "confidential" cooperation with foreigners.

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