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Veteran Russian Rock Star Fined Over Onstage War Criticism

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Musician Yuri Shevchuk. **Emin Jafarov / Kommersant**

A court in Russia's republic of Bashkortostan on Tuesday fined a veteran rock star over an anti-war speech he made onstage at a concert earlier this year.

Yury Shevchuk, the legendary frontman of rock band DDT, spoke out against Russia's invasion of Ukraine during the band's concert in his native city of Ufa in May.

"The motherland, my friends, is not the president's ass that has to be slobbered and kissed all the time. The motherland is an impoverished babushka at the train station selling potatoes," Shevchuk had told the crowd of 8,000 fans, who also recorded video of the speech.

Shevchuk, 65, was charged with "discrediting" the Russian Armed Forces and ordered to pay a fine of 50,000 rubles ($815), lawyer Pavel Chikov, the head of the Agora human rights group, said in a Telegram post.

The musician was interrogated by police after the May concert but later released despite fears

of his potential arrest.

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Because Shevchuk didn't attend Tuesday's hearing in person, his lawyer Alexander Peredruk relayed his final statement to the court.

"I, Yury Shevchuk, have always been against wars in any country at any time. I stood against the wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Chechnya, Abkhazia, Georgia, Ossetia, in [Nagorno] Karabakh, Iraq and so on," the musician said in his statement published by Chikov.

Shevchuk noted that his statements at past concerts as well as the popular DDT song "Don't Shoot" further reflect his stance and that he believes that all conflicts should be solved "by diplomatic means."

"I am also against the war in Donbas that has been going on for eight years and the current special military operation in Ukraine," Shevchuk added.

Shevchuk is well-known in Russia and beyond for his vocal anti-Kremlin stance, support for anti-Kremlin activist collective Pussy Riot and opposition to Russia's annexation of Crimea.

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