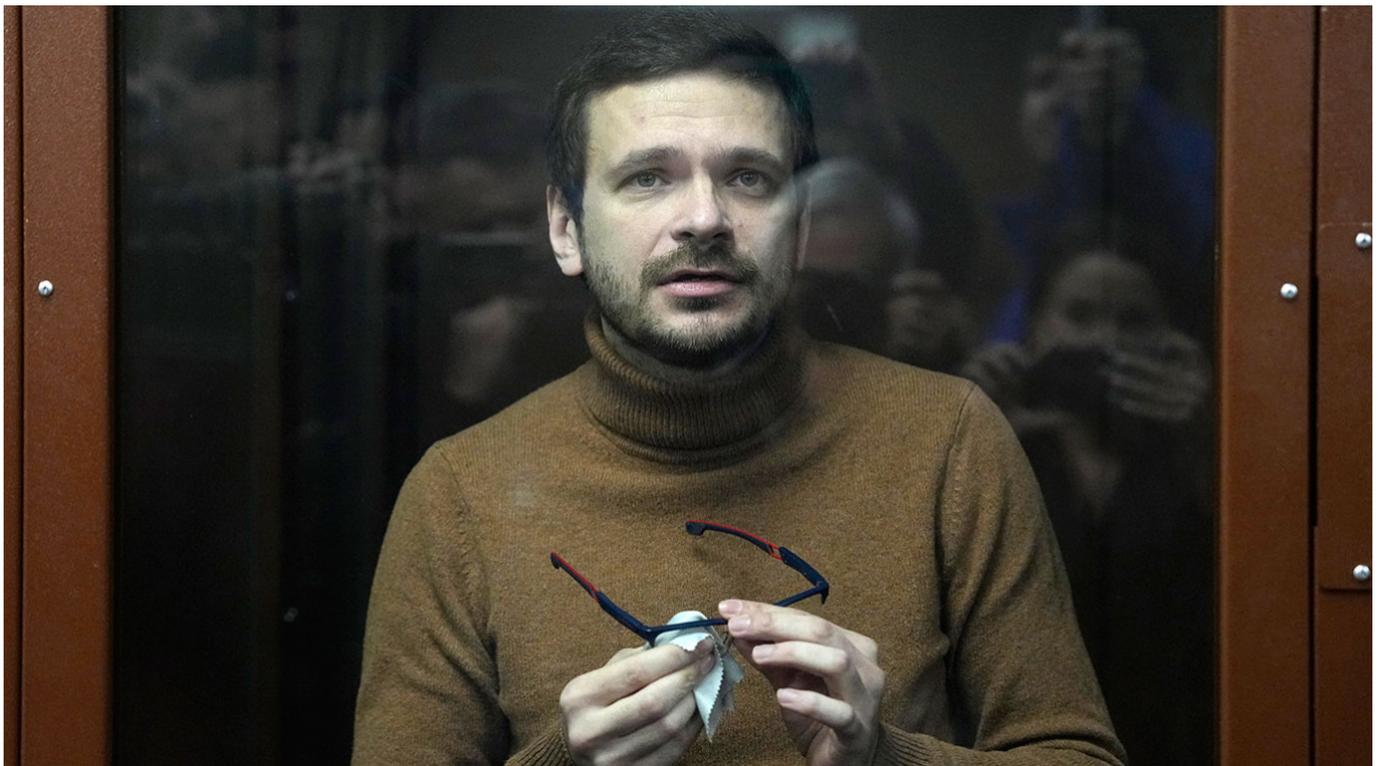


Kremlin Critic Yashin Given 8.5 Years in Jail for Bucha Massacre Claims

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Russian opposition activist Ilya Yashin. **Alexander Zemlianichenko / AP / TASS**

A Moscow court on Friday sentenced prominent opposition politician Ilya Yashin to eight and a half years in jail for spreading "false" information about the Russian military in his criticism of the Kremlin invasion of Ukraine.

The 39-year-old Moscow city councilor was found guilty for saying that occupying Russian forces in Ukraine were responsible for the massacre of civilians in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha this spring.

Judge Oksana Goryunova of the Meshchansky district court said Yashin had committed a crime by disseminating "knowingly false information about Russia's Armed Forces."

One of the few vocal Kremlin critics who chose to stay in Russia following the war's outbreak, Yashin made his comments during a YouTube stream in April, though he wasn't arrested until July.

An ally of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, Yashin is one of [hundreds](#) of Russians to face prosecution under new laws that criminalize spreading information contradicting the Kremlin line about the war, though this is the harshest punishment yet to be handed down for such a case.

In his [closing address](#) to the court earlier this week Yashin labeled the law and his imprisonment “the will of Vladimir Putin,” adding that the Russian president also bears personal responsibility for the “bloodbath” in Ukraine.

Related article: [‘People Are Running From You, Mr. President. Can’t You See?’](#)

Yashin's legal team said that while the verdict was depressing it was not unexpected.

“This hasn't happened for a long time, since the Brezhnev era,” Vadim Prokhorov told The Moscow Times. “We will use all legal means to appeal the verdict. I am sure that over time the sentence will be quashed, and Yashin will be cleared.”

Yashin’s supporters, including prominent opposition politicians, gathered outside the courthouse in Moscow ahead of the verdict and sentencing on Friday.

“This trial is unfair, it violates the constitutional rights to freedom of speech — not only Ilya’s rights, but also the rights of all Russian citizens,” said former Moscow municipal deputy Yulia Galyamina outside the court.

“It is clear that his prison term will be long, but I’m sure that he won’t serve all of it,” Galyamina added.

Mikhail Lobanov, another Russian politician who was outside the court awaiting the sentencing said it was “yet another prison sentence for nothing.”

From his own penal colony, jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny called the case "another shameless and lawless verdict by Putin's court" and said it would "not silence Ilya and should not intimidate the honest people of Russia."

"This is yet another reason why we need to keep fighting, and I have no doubt we will ultimately win," Navalny said via Twitter.

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