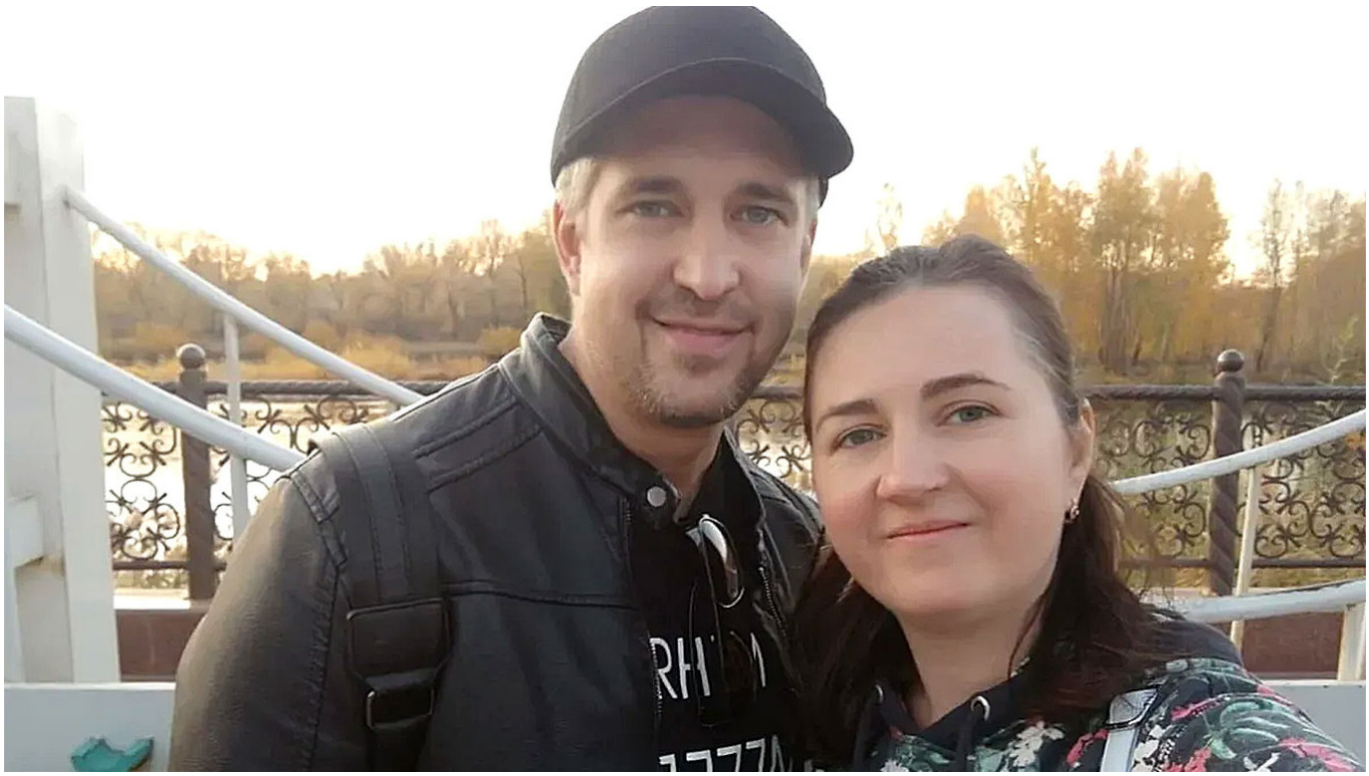
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Ex-Presidential Guard Who Fled Russian Draft Faces Extradition, Jail

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Mikhail Zhilin and his wife Yekaterina. **Photo from personal archive**

A former Russian presidential guard who fled President Vladimir Putin's mobilization now faces extradition from neighboring Kazakhstan on charges of desertion and illegal border-crossing, Kazakh media has reported.

If approved, Mikhal Zhilin's extradition would mark the first publicly known time an allied country has returned a draft dodger to Russia, where his family says he faces torture and abuse.

Police in the Kazakh capital of Astana arrested Zhilin at the airport on Dec. 6 as he attempted to board a flight to Armenia, according to Radio Azattyq, the Kazakh affiliate of the U.S. news organization RFE/RL.

Russia reportedly placed him on an international wanted list for desertion and illegal border crossing.

Zhilin, 36, faces up to 15 years in Russian prison if he is extradited and convicted.

Zhilin is a former shift supervisor of the Federal Guard Service's (FSO) special communications and information department in Siberia which oversees Putin's contacts with Russia's regions.

Related article: 'I Don't Trust What They Say': Russian Draft Dodgers Stay in Hiding Even as Putin Announces Mobilization's End

Federal employees like Zhilin are not permitted to leave Russia because they have access to state secrets.

Five days after Putin declared a "partial" mobilization of reserves on Sept. 21, Zhilin crossed into Kazakhstan without going through a border checkpoint and requested political asylum after being detained.

Zhilin's wife Yekaterina, who entered Kazakhstan with their children through a border post, told Russian media that Russian authorities opened the criminal case against him on Sept. 27, one day after his detention.

A court in northeastern Kazakhstan found Zhilin guilty of illegally crossing the border on Dec. 2 and handed him a six-month suspended sentence.

On Monday, another court in Astana ordered Zhilin to 40 days of pre-trial detention, according to Azattyq.

Yekaterina said her husband's lawyers and relatives are appealing the Kazakh authorities' refusal to grant him asylum in late November.

"Russia is highly interested in men who know how to hold a gun," Azattyq quoted her as saying. "They'll try to force him to go to war, so we're afraid he'll be tortured."

Russian authorities rejected Zhilin's resignation request from the FSO which he submitted after Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February.

Kazakhstan has pledged not to extradite Russians who fled their country's mobilization unless they are under criminal investigation.

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