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Russia Orders Climate Activist's Family Out of the Country

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Arshak Makichyan. **Arshak Makichyan / instagram**

Russian authorities this week ordered the family members of the prominent climate and anti-war activist Arshak Makichyan to leave the country.

Makichyan was stripped of Russian citizenship — the only one he holds — along with his father and a brother in October, a move that the activist and his lawyers labeled as a deliberate attempt to silence Kremlin critics.

The decision to revoke the citizenship of Makichyan and his family members was based on a court ruling claiming they provided false information when applying for Russian citizenship in 2002.

Makichyan and his wife were forced to flee Russia when the invasion of Ukraine began last February. But his family, Armenians who fled the Karabakh war and settled in Russia in 1995, had stayed in the country despite being deprived of their citizenship.

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The October ruling was upheld Wednesday at an appeal hearing in the Moscow region, requiring Makichayn's brother Gagik Makichyan and father Artur Makichyan to leave Russia by Feb. 2 and 4, respectively.

Artur Makichyan was detained on charges of suspected forgery of a photo in his Russian passport immediately after the court hearing. Gagik Makichyan was detained the same day on unspecified charges despite being absent from the hearing, according to Makichyan's lawyers.

"The citizenship case against me and my family is horrific, the government shouldn't have the power to cancel activists' families' lives," Arshak Makichyan wrote on his Twitter Friday.

"And the silence of European politicians is also disturbing. All terrible things are happening because of the indifference of many," the activist added.

UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders Mar Lawlor called the Russian court's decision and the news of the arrests of Makichyan's family "disturbing."

"I am concerned that this might be a retaliation for his human rights advocacy on climate change and against the war in Ukraine," said Lawlor.

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