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FSB Bans Climate Activist's Family From Russia for Half a Century

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Arshak Makichyan **Arshak Makichyan / instagram**

Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) has banned the family of prominent Russian-Armenian climate activist and anti-war campaigner Arshak Makichyan from entering Russia for the next 50 years, he announced on social media Wednesday.

"It is a lifetime ban, even for my younger brother," the activist tweeted.

Arshak Makichyan, whose family fled the war in Nagorno-Karabakh and settled in Russia in 1995, was stripped of his Russian citizenship — the only one he holds — along with his father Artur Makichyan and brother Gago Makichyan last month.

While Arshak fled Russia with his wife shortly after the invasion of Ukraine last year and is currently living in Germany, his father and brother both initially remained in the country despite being stripped of their citizenship. They were both forced to leave Russia last month after they were detained by law enforcement and given a court order to leave the country immediately.

Related article: Climate Activist Arshak Makichyan Stripped of Russian Citizenship

The half-century ban subsequently imposed on Artur and Gago by the FSB was done so in the interests of Russian "state security and defense capability," according to information obtained by the family's lawyers.

The family says that the persecution they are facing is simply retaliation by the Russian authorities for Arshak's activism and an attempt to silence him.

"I don't believe it is connected to my activities in any way because I am a simple musician who plays in orchestras ... and I've never written or said anything out of line," Gago Makichyan told The Moscow Times. "I was simply affected by this because I'm my brother's brother."

Gago Makichyan, 25, was born in Moscow and was a naturalized Russian citizen until being stripped of his citizenship last year.

"I would be happy to celebrate my 75th birthday in Moscow, but I hope I will have an opportunity to return sooner because I am very much attached to Russia," Gago said, noting that he hoped political change in Russia might bring about a reversal of the FSB's decision.

The family's lawyer Maxim Olenichev on Wednesday called the FSB's decision "groundless" and said it violated "Russia's international obligations."

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