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Kremlin Critic Facing 25 Years in Jail Says Regrets Nothing

By AFP

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In this file photo taken on Oct. 10, 2022, Russian opposition activist Vladimir Kara-Murza is escorted for a hearing at the Basmanny court in Moscow. **Natalia Kolesnikova / AFP**

Russian opposition figure Vladimir Kara-Murza said on Monday he stood by all of his political statements, including against the Ukraine offensive, that led him to face 25 years in jail.

"I subscribe to every word that I have said, that I am incriminated for today," Kara-Murza said, citing his fight against the Ukraine offensive and President Vladimir Putin.

"Not only do I not repent for any of it — I am proud of it," he said in his last words to the court, which were published on journalist Alexei Venediktov's Telegram channel.

Kara-Murza, 41, is accused of several charges including treason, and spreading false information about the Russian army.

"I only blame myself for one thing," Kara-Murza said.

"I failed to convince enough of my compatriots and politicians in democratic countries of the danger that the current Kremlin regime poses for Russia and for the world."

The Western-educated journalist was a close associate of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, who was shot dead near the Kremlin in 2015.

"I'm proud of the fact that Boris Nemtsov brought me into politics. And I hope he's not ashamed of me," Kara-Murza said.

His high-profile trial is the latest in a string of cases against opposition voices in Russia in a crackdown that has intensified since Putin sent troops to Ukraine last year.

Prosecutors have called for 25 years against him.

The verdict is expected next Monday, but the politician said, "I know my sentence... such is the price for non-silence in Russia now."

Kara-Murza says he was poisoned twice — in 2015 and 2017 — because of his political activities, but he continued to spend long periods of time in Russia.

His condition has worsened in prison, his lawyer Vadim Prokhorov has said.

"I also know that the day will come when the darkness over our country will dissipate," Kara-Murza also said.

"When the war will be called a war... when the ones who instigated and started this war will be the ones branded as criminals, and not people who tried to stop it."

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