The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Court Extends U.S. Journalist's Pre-Trial Detention Until December

October 23, 2023



Alsu Kurmasheva seen during a court hearing. **Alina Faizrakhmanova / TASS**

A Russian-American journalist for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty has been ordered to stay in pre-trial detention until December on charges of failing to register as a foreign agent, her employer said Monday.

Alsu Kurmasheva, an editor with the U.S.-funded outlet's Tatar-Bashkir service who was detained last Wednesday, faces up to five years in prison if found guilty of violating Russia's law on foreign agents.

The Sovetski District Court in Kazan, the capital of Russia's republic of Tatarstan, ruled Monday to extend Kurmasheva's pre-trial detention until Dec. 5.

Kurmasheva's lawyer requested her release pending trial.

The hearing was held behind closed doors, according to RFE/RL's Tatar-Bashkir service, Idel.Realii.

The outlet said Kurmasheva is the first person to face criminal punishment for failure to register as a "foreign agent" in Russia.

"We are deeply disappointed by the outcome of today's hearing. We call for Alsu's immediate release so she can be reunited with her family," RFE/RL acting President Jeffrey Gedmin said.

Related article: Arrest of Tatar-American Journalist 'A Terrible Tragedy,' Friends Say

The Kremlin said it was unaware of Kurmasheva's case and denied that it was pursuing a campaign to persecute U.S. citizens.

Kurmasheva is the second U.S. journalist to be held by Russia in less than a year.

Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich has been held in a Moscow prison since March on espionage charges, which Washington and his employer strongly reject.

Kurmasheva was temporarily detained at a Kazan airport on June 2, where both her U.S. and Russian passports were confiscated and she was fined for failing to register her American passport with the authorities.

She was detained again last Wednesday on charges of failing to register as a foreign agent.

The Justice Ministry in 2017 labeled RFE/RL and several of its affiliates, including Idel.Realii, as "foreign agents" in response to the U.S. requiring the Kremlin-funded RT broadcaster to register as a "foreign agent."

Kurmasheva herself is not a designated "foreign agent."

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/10/23/russian-court-extends-us-journalists-pre-trial-detention-until-december-a82853