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Russian Prosecutors Seek 8-Year Jail Term for Artist Over Supermarket Protest

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Alexandra Skochilenko. **Olga Maltseva / AFP**

Russian prosecutors on Wednesday requested an eight-year prison sentence for artist Alexandra Skochilenko, who was arrested last year for an anti-war protest in which she replaced supermarket price tags with information about civilian deaths in Ukraine.

The 33-year-old artist and musician has been in detention since April 2022, when she was arrested for swapping out price tags at a St. Petersburg supermarket with statements criticizing Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and highlighting civilian deaths in the conflict.

"The prosecution has asked for eight years," the independent Mediazona news website reported Wednesday, citing a journalist in the courtroom in St. Petersburg.

The criminal offense, which carries a maximum term of 10 years behind bars, was introduced after Moscow invaded Ukraine last year and has been used to stifle criticism of the war.

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"The words about how Russia attacked Ukraine are false," Mediazona quoted the prosecutor as saying.

"The aim of the special military operation was to protect the citizens of Donbas from aggression," the prosecutor added, using the Kremlin's preferred term for its February 2022 invasion.

Skochilenko has been on trial despite a number of health conditions, including celiac disease and a congenital heart defect.

On Wednesday, the artist and her lawyers spoke of the poor conditions she had been held in during her detainment, as well as a lack of medical treatment.

During a September court hearing, Skochilenko said she had not eaten for two days due to the court's tight schedule.

“I just wanted the war to stop because these are my values: life is sacred to me, I just wanted to stop the war — that was my motivation,” the artist said during a court hearing earlier this month.

AFP contributed to this reporting.

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