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Russian Court Extends Detention of U.S.-Russian Journalist Kurmasheva

By AFP

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Alsu Kurmasheva seen attending a hearing as the Sovetsky District Court in Kazan. **Yegor Aleyev / TASS**

A Russian court on Friday extended the pre-trial detention of U.S.-Russian journalist Alsu Kurmasheva, who was arrested in October for failing to register as a "foreign agent," her employer said.

Kurmasheva, who holds both Russian and American citizenship, was working for the U.S.-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) media outlet when she was detained by law enforcement officers in the Russian city of Kazan.

"A court in Kazan extended the detention of Radio Liberty journalist Alsu Kurmasheva until February 5, 2024," RFE/RL reported on Friday.

She is the second U.S. journalist to be arrested in Russia this year amid the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Earlier this week a Moscow court extended the pre-trial detention of Wall Street Journal correspondent Evan Gershkovich, who was arrested on treason charges in March.

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Kurmasheva, who lives in Prague with her husband and two children, was charged with failing to register as a "foreign agent."

Both she and Gershkovich deny the charges against them.

Kurmasheva faces up to five years in prison if found guilty, and her lawyers and employer have called for her immediate release.

Russia has used controversial "foreign agents" legislation as part of a sweeping crackdown on the opposition and independent media operating inside the country.

The law requires organizations and individuals designated as "foreign agents" — a term that has Soviet-era spying connotations — to mark all their publications with a foreign agent label and submit reports on their activities to the Russian government.

It also requires any Russian citizens to self-register if they engage in activity that poses a threat to Russia's "national security."

Kurmasheva was arrested after initially having her passports confiscated in June when she traveled to Russia for a family emergency.

The Committee to Protect Journalists called on Wednesday for the U.S. State Department to designate Kurmasheva as "wrongfully detained," a move which would trigger more intensive diplomatic efforts in Washington to secure her release.

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