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Former Russian Minister Sentenced to 12 Years for Embezzlement

By AFP

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Russia's former open government minister Mikhail Abyzov charged with embezzling 4bln roubles and forming a criminal group appears for a sentence hearing at the Preobrazhensky District Court. **Valery Sharifulin / TASS**

A Russian court Thursday condemned a former minister and ally of ex-president Dmitry Medvedev to 12 years in prison for embezzlement and criminal conspiracy.

Mikhail Abyzov was also fined 80 million rubles ($860,000) by the Moscow court, according to Russian media reports.

One of his lawyers, Arthur Bolshakov, told the TASS news agency that he hasn't decided yet whether to appeal.

According to prosecutors, Abyzov created a "criminal gang" and between 2011 and 2014 embezzled more than 4 billion rubles, or around $60 million at 2019 exchange rates, with the

help of five other energy executives and entrepreneurs.

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Abyzov, 51, who lived between Italy and the United States, was arrested in early 2019 by the Federal Security Service (FSB) during a visit to Moscow.

Abyzov was minister for relations with civil society from 2012-2018, and in 2014 was ranked as the highest-earning cabinet member with an annual income of 282 million rubles, or about $6 million at 2019 rates.

Until his arrest, he was considered to a "liberal" and close to Medvedev, who brought him into the government in 2012.

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