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Russian Hands 2-Year Jail Sentence to Evan Gershkovich's Interviewee

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Yaroslav Shirshikov in court. **Vladimir Zhabrikov / URA.RU / TASS**

Updated with court ruling.

A Russian court has handed a two-year prison sentence to PR expert and activist Yaroslav Shirshikov, who was among the first to report on U.S. journalist Evan Gershkovich's arrest in March last year, local media reported Tuesday.

Shirshikov has said he gave an interview to Gershkovich and helped him with his reporting not long before the Wall Street Journal correspondent was arrested in the city of Yekaterinburg on suspicion of espionage, which both he and his employer deny.

Authorities arrested Shirshikov weeks later on charges of "justifying terrorism" over comments about the assassination of pro-war blogger Valery Tatarsky.

He had written on messaging app Telegram that he felt "not a tinge of sadness" about the death of Tatarsky — whom he described as a "scumbag" — in a bombing attack in St.

Petersburg on April 2.

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In addition to the jail sentence, Shirshikov was also banned from managing public channels on Telegram for two years.

State prosecutors had asked the court to sentence Shirshikov to six years in a medium-security prison.

There is no official link between Shirshikov's terrorism case and Gershkovich's espionage case.

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