

Russia Jails Activist Pyotr Verzilov in Absentia Following Retrial

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Peter Verzilov. **Peter Verzilov / Instagram**

A Moscow court has sentenced exiled Russian-Canadian activist Pyotr Verzilov to eight years and four months in prison in absentia under wartime censorship laws, Russian media [reported](#) Tuesday.

In November, Verzilov was sentenced to eight-and-a-half years in prison in absentia for spreading “war fakes,” but an appellate court [overturned](#) the verdict in March due to unspecified procedural violations and sent the case for a retrial.

Prosecutors accused Verzilov of “misleading citizens” about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine [with social media posts](#) about the summary execution of civilians in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha in the spring of 2022.

According to the Telegram news channel Ostorozhno Novosti, Moscow’s Basmany District Court found Verzilov guilty of spreading “deliberately false” information about the Russian military and sentenced him to eight years and four months in prison in absentia.

Related article: [Russia Overturns 'War Fakes' Sentence Against Activist Pyotr Verzilov](#)

Verzilov, who was the publisher of the independent news outlet Mediazona until October, fled Russia in 2020 amid police searches at his and his relatives' homes after he was charged with failing to inform the Russian authorities about his Canadian citizenship. He is also a member of the anti-Kremlin performance art group Pussy Riot.

Russia's Justice Ministry labeled Verzilov, Mediazona and its editor-in-chief Sergei Smirnov "foreign agents" in 2021.

Last month, FSB agents carried out searches in several Russian cities as part of newly opened "[treason](#)" charges against Verzilov.

Verzilov said last fall that he had traveled to Ukraine to [film](#) a documentary, but he later [joined](#) the Ukrainian army.

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