

Russia Upholds 'Foreign Agent' Status for Jailed Dissident Orlov

By [AFP](#)

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Oleg Orlov. **Sergei Karpukhin / TASS**

A Moscow court on Wednesday rejected an appeal by imprisoned dissident Oleg Orlov to be removed from the Russian Justice Ministry's "foreign agent" list.

Orlov, 71, who is serving a two-and-a-half-year prison term for criticizing the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, was designated a "foreign agent" ahead of his sentencing in February.

Moscow's Zamoskvoretsky court upheld the "foreign agent" label for the dissident, who has spent much of his life fighting for human rights as co-chair of the Memorial rights organization.

Orlov took part in the hearing via video link from his prison in Syzran, around 750 kilometers southeast of Moscow.

"I think that the justice is acting out of the axiom: If you criticize authorities then you are

definitely under foreign influence," he said during the hearing. "What can you do if all honest media are foreign agents?"

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A representative from Russia's Justice Ministry said Orlov's international recognition and string of renowned human rights awards were evidence that his designation as a "foreign agent" was justified.

"Even his own prizes prove that he is under foreign influence," the representative said, citing as an example the EU's Sakharov Prize that Orlov was awarded in 2009.

Orlov's lawyer Yekaterina Tertukhina said the ruling showed "that any person or organization who criticizes authorities in foreign media or to a foreign agent can themselves become a foreign agent."

Around 20 people came to the court to support Orlov. His wife, Tatiana, was both in tears and laughing as she listened to her husband speak.

During the hearing, Orlov described his life in prison, saying his cell measures two by four meters and that prisoners share books and talk through the walls.

"There are a lot of sick people here but we were able to warm things up with hot water," he said.

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