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# Russia Upholds Prison Sentence for Nationalist Girkin

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Igor Girkin (Strelkov). **Pelagia Tikhonova / Moskva News Agency**

A Moscow court on Wednesday ruled to uphold the four-year prison sentence for Russian nationalist and ex-rebel commander Igor Girkin.

Girkin, a convicted war criminal in the West better known by his pseudonym Igor Strelkov, was arrested last summer after criticizing Russian President Vladimir Putin for his handling of the war against Ukraine. In January, the 54-year-old was sentenced to four years in prison for "inciting extremism."

"The court has considered the appeal against I.V. Girkin's verdict and decided to leave the sentence unchanged," the state-run news agency TASS quoted the court's press service as saying.

"I serve the fatherland," Girkin was quoted as saying by independent news outlet Mediazona when asked by the judge whether he understood the ruling. The appeal hearing was heard behind closed doors, Mediazona said.

**Related article**: Jailed Russian Nationalist Girkin Seeking to Fight in Eastern Ukraine Despite Ban

Girkin's lawyers said they plan to file a cassation appeal against the decision to leave his sentence unchanged.

"We will definitely appeal this decision in cassation. The cassation appeal will be considered by the [Russian] Supreme Court," one of the lawyers was quoted as saying by TASS.

Girkin commanded a pro-Russian separatist militia in eastern Ukraine in 2014 and played a key role in the annexation of Crimea. In November 2022, a Dutch court sentenced him in absentia to life in prison over the 2014 downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 in eastern Ukraine, which killed all 298 people on board.

Last month his wife said that her husband was seeking to clear his criminal record and serve at the front line in eastern Ukraine.

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