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Moscow Court Upholds Prison Sentence of Dissident Oleg Orlov

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A television screen showing jailed human rights activist Oleg Orlov. **Maxim Shipenkov / EPA / TASS**

A Moscow court on Thursday rejected an appeal by jailed human rights defender Oleg Orlov against his imprisonment for criticizing the Kremlin's war against Ukraine.

Orlov, 71, was sentenced to 2.5 years in prison this year on charges of "discrediting" the Russian military with his anti-war pickets and the 2022 article titled: "They Wanted Fascism. They Got It," in which he called the war against Kyiv "a severe blow to Russia's future."

Speaking via video link from prison in the central city of Syzran, Orlov quoted a passage from a prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials against Nazi German war criminals to describe Russia's judicial system.

"They distorted, perverted and in the end achieved the total destruction of justice and law. They made the judicial system an integral part of the dictatorship," he told the court, quoting Telford Taylor, a senior U.S. prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials.

Related article: ‘I Believe in a Better Future’: Rights Veteran Oleg Orlov on His 2.5-Year Sentence for Opposing Ukraine War

"These words can now be uttered by any Russian political prisoner. These words are surprisingly appropriate to characterize the current state of the Russian judicial system," Orlov said.

Orlov, an instrumental figure in the Nobel Prize-winning human rights organization Memorial, is one of the few anti-war activists who have stayed in Russia since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, which triggered a broad crackdown on dissent, forcing many to flee the country.

Speaking to journalists via video link to the court before the session, Orlov said: "I do not regret or repent anything.”

“I am in the right place at the right time. I help draw attention to mass repression," he said.

AFP contributed reporting.

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