The Moscow Times
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Russia Rejects Anti-Putin Shaman's Plea for Hospital Transfer

By AFP

July 15, 2024



Alexander Gabyshev. **Esenia Sofronova (CC BY-SA 4.0)**

Russia on Monday denied a plea from a Siberian shaman for transfer out of a severe psychiatric hospital over three years after being confined for protesting against President Vladimir Putin, his lawyer said.

Alexander Gabyshev, 55, was sent to a psychiatric hospital in January 2021 after repeatedly attempting to walk from his native republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in Russia's Far East to Moscow in a bid to "exorcise" Putin from office.

A Siberian court refused to soften his treatment and transfer him to a general psychiatric hospital in May, a decision Primorsky Regional Court upheld on Monday, his lawyer Alexei Pryanishnikov said.

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"We will appeal up to the Supreme Court. In the meantime, a commission of psychiatrists will hold another examination of Alexander Gabyshev in early October," Pryanishnikov said.

Russia has been criticized by rights groups for using psychiatry and forced confinement in mental institutions as a punitive tool against dissent, a practice that was systemic in the Soviet Union.

Gabyshev's involuntary confinement in psychiatric hospitals may amount to a form of torture, Amnesty International has said, while Russian rights group Memorial has recognized him as a political prisoner.

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