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# More Russian Political Prisoners Moved, Fueling Speculation of Imminent Swap

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Kevin Lik. **Social media**

Two more Russian political prisoners have been moved to unknown locations, lawyers and relatives said Tuesday, coming days after the transfer of four high-profile dissidents that has fueled speculation of a potential prisoner swap between Moscow and the West.

Imprisoned activists Lilia Chanysheva, Ksenia Fadeyeva and Oleg Orlov were reportedly moved from their jail cells in recent days, with allies saying that their whereabouts were unknown. So, too, was the anti-war artist Alexandra Skochilenko transferred from the St. Petersburg correctional facility where she was placed last year.

On Tuesday, jailed opposition figure and former Moscow city councilman Ilya Yashin was taken from the Smolensk region penal colony where he was being held, a group of his supporters said, citing his lawyer Tatiana Solomina.

Yashin, a longtime ally of the late activist Alexei Navalny, was handed an eight-and-a-half-year prison sentence in 2022 for publically condemning Russia's full-scale invasion of

Ukraine earlier that year.

**Related article**: Whereabouts of 4 Russian Dissidents Unknown After Apparent Jail Transfers

Similarly, jailed 19-year-old Kevin Lik was moved from the Arkhangelsk region correctional facility where he was being held for treason, a group of supporters said Tuesday. According to the group, prison authorities told the teenager's mother by email that "there's no such inmate in the prison."

Lik, a dual Russian-German citizen, was arrested in southern Russia in February 2023 for allegedly sending photos of Russian soldiers to a "foreign state." He became the youngest person in the country to be sentenced on treason charges after a judge handed him a four-year jail term in a closed-door trial late last year.

It was not immediately clear if any of the sudden prisoner transfers were connected. However, some political observers are hinting that both the scale and timing of the transfers may signal that Moscow is preparing a prison exchange with Western governments.

"It would seem that we are on the verge of a very large-scale exchange with the Americans (and not only)," said Tatiana Stanovaya, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center.

Yashin previously said he did not want to be part of any prison exchange.

The sudden transfer of the six political prisoners comes less than two weeks after Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich and Russian-American journalist Alsu Kurmasheva were sentenced to jail in Russia. Observers believe Washington and Moscow may soon reach a deal on exchanging both journalists with Russian nationals jailed in the West.

When asked later on Tuesday whether preparations were underway for a swap involving Gershkovich and other prisoners, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told the Vedomosti business newspaper "We do not comment on this topic."

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