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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Hands 8-Year Term To Exiled Kremlin Critic Gudkov

By AFP

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Evgenij Razumnyj / Vedomosti / TASS

A Russian court on Wednesday sentenced exiled opposition politician and former MP Dmitry Gudkov to eight years in prison "in absentia" for criticism of Russia's war in Ukraine.

Gudkov, who served as a lawmaker in Russia's parliament from 2011 to 2016, was found guilty of publishing "false information" about the Russian military, motivated by "political hatred," the Moscow prosecutor's office said in a statement.

Since launching its offensive in Ukraine, Russia has issued multiple court rulings convicting Kremlin opponents who have left the country of crimes, making them liable for arrest if they ever returned.

It has criminalized disseminating "false information" about Russia's Armed Forces or discrediting the military.

Gudkov, 44, a vocal critic of President Vladimir Putin, said the sentence was a "badge of honor."

In a post on Instagram, he said his thoughts were with "the hundreds of real, and not 'in absentia' Russian political prisoners who are waiting either for an ephemeral chance of a new exchange or for the end of their 'while Putin is alive' sentences."

Now based in Cyprus, Gudkov left Russia in 2021 after announcing he would run again for the State Duma.

He said at the time that sources close to the Kremlin had told him he would be arrested if he did not flee the country.

He left — initially for Ukraine — days after being detained by police and having his house searched.

He and his father Gennady Gudkov were both lawmakers in A Just Russia party, from which they were expelled for campaigning against the Kremlin.

Gennady Gudkov left Russia in 2019.

Moscow has also labeled Dmitry Gudkov a "foreign agent."

In June he was part of a group of exiled Kremlin critics that urged EU countries to do more to welcome Russians fleeing Putin's government.

The criminal case was launched against him over a video posted on YouTube in April 2022 where he criticized the actions of Russia's military in Ukraine, prosecutors said.

Gudkov was a close ally of the late opposition leader Alexei Navalny, having spoken alongside him at huge opposition rallies in Moscow against Putin's election for a third term in 2012.

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