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French Researcher Appeals 3-Year Jail Sentence, Moscow Court Says

By AFP

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Laurent Vinatier. **Yulia Morozova / TASS**

A Moscow court said Tuesday that French researcher Laurent Vinatier filed an appeal against the three-year prison sentence handed to him last week for breaking Russia's "foreign agent" laws.

Vinatier, a 48-year-old researcher working for a Swiss conflict mediation NGO, was arrested in Moscow in June and charged with gathering information on Russia's military without being registered as a "foreign agent."

"The appeal against the verdict was registered on Oct. 21," Moscow's Zamoskvoretsky District Court said on its website.

Vinatier pleaded guilty during his trial but said he was unaware that he should have registered as a "foreign agent" — a label that has been almost exclusively used against Russia's

domestic opposition.

French President Emmanuel Macron has demanded that Russia release Vinatier, whose arrest came as tensions between Paris and Moscow mounted over the war in Ukraine.

Western countries have accused Moscow of arresting their citizens on baseless charges to use them for prisoner swaps.

In August, Russia and the West held the biggest prisoner exchange since the Cold War.

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