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Russia Arrests ICC Judge Mahfoudh in Absentia – Mediazona

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Judge Haykel Ben Mahfoudh. **icc-cpi.int**

A Russian court ordered the arrest in absentia of International Criminal Court (ICC) Judge Haykel Ben Mahfoudh, who himself earlier issued arrest warrants for Russian military leaders, the independent news website Mediazona reported Monday.

Mahfoudh was among three ICC judges who issued arrest warrants in June for former defense minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimov over Russia's alleged war crimes in Ukraine.

The Kremlin dismissed those warrants as "absurd" and lacking in legal force. Russia is not a member of the ICC and does not recognize its jurisdiction.

Authorities in Russia charged Mahfoudh with "unlawful" detention, a crime punishable by up to four years in prison, according to Mediazona, which did not name its sources.

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Mediazona said Moscow's Basmanny District Court ruled to place Mahfoudh, who became an ICC judge earlier this year, in pre-trial detention in absentia.

In March 2023, the Hague-based court issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin and his children's rights commissioner over the illegal deportation of Ukrainian children.

Kyiv claims thousands of children were forcibly deported from orphanages and other state institutions after Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022. Moscow maintains that it relocated the children for their safety.

Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, immediately announced a criminal investigation into ICC prosecutor Karim Khan and three other judges based on their "unlawful" decision to seek Putin's arrest.

Despite the Kremlin's dismissal of the ICC's arrest warrants as inconsequential, Putin has cut back on his foreign travel since the March 2023 arrest warrant. Putin's trip to Mongolia in September was his first to an ICC member state since the warrant was issued.

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