The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia to Release Anti-Putin Yakutian Shaman From Psychiatric Facility

December 25, 2024



Shaman Alexander Gabyshev. **RFE / RL**

A Russian court on Wednesday ruled to move prominent Yakutian shaman Alexander Gabyshev from a high-security psychiatric facility to a general hospital, his lawyer said.

"This transfer... is a step toward freedom. The grip of psychiatric treatment has somewhat loosened," lawyer Alexei Pryanishnikov said.

It remains unclear whether Gabyshev will be relocated to his native republic of Sakha (Yakutia) or remain in the Far Eastern town of Ussuriysk, where he has been undergoing forced psychiatric treatment.

"The only positive aspect of being transferred to Yakutsk is being closer to home and loved ones," Pryanishnikov said, referring to the regional capital. "But there should be no illusions about the Yakutsk hospital: it was the doctors at the Yakutsk psychiatric clinic who declared Alexander insane to appease law enforcement."

Related article: ‘He Was Right All Along’: 5 Years Since Arrest, Support for Anti-Putin Shaman Is Stronger Than Ever

Gabyshev, 55, began an 8,000-kilometer (4,971-mile) trek from his native Sakha to Moscow in March 2019 with the goal of “exorcizing” President Vladimir Putin, whom he described as the “embodiment of evil.”

The shaman, who gained a cult following and made international headlines during his journey, was arrested several months after setting out on the road.

Gabyshev has spent most of the past five years in psychiatric facilities, where he has been subjected to life-threatening treatments that rights groups have compared to torture, despite independent medical experts attesting to his mental sanity.

Russian human rights group Memorial has recognized Gabyshev as a political prisoner.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/12/25/russia-to-release-anti-putin-yakutian-shaman-from-psychiatric-facility-a87452