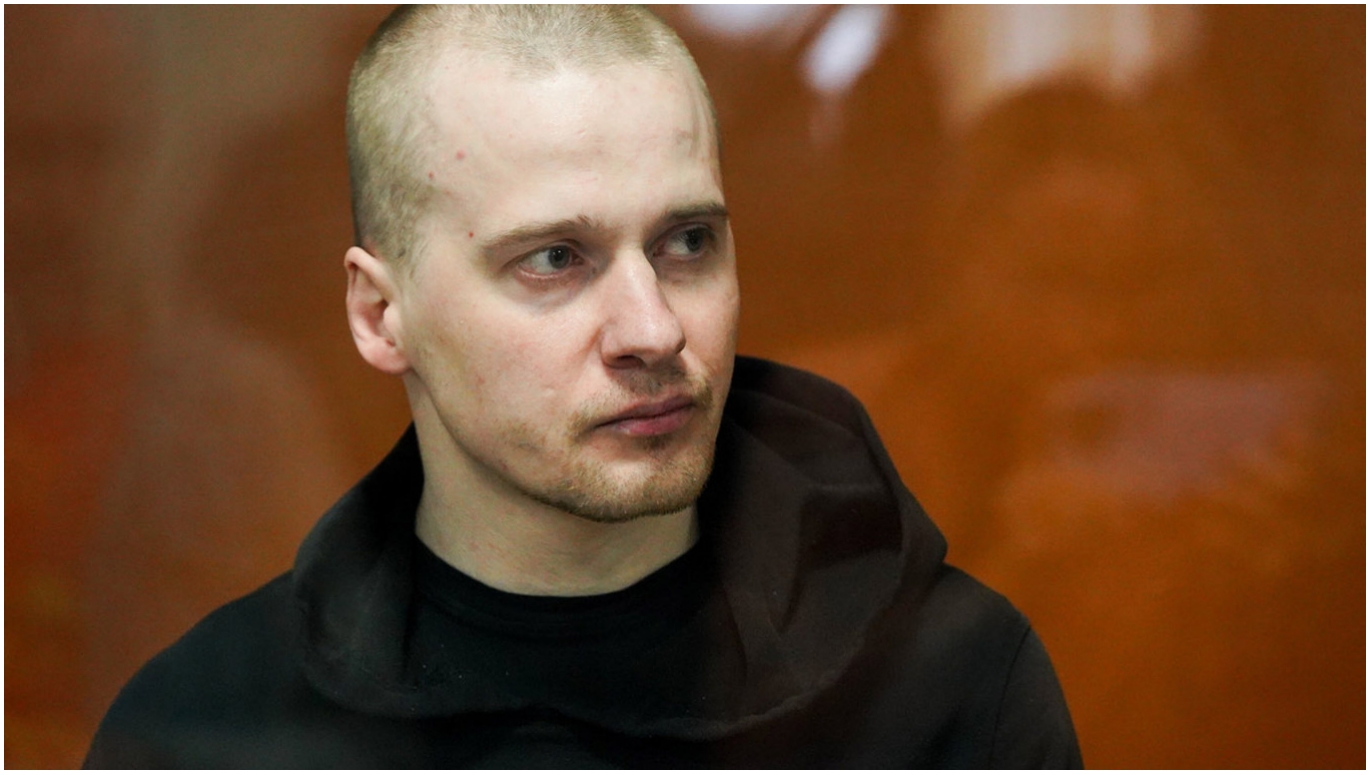
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Russian Court Upholds Life Sentence in Zakhar Prilepin Car Bombing Case

By AFP

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Alexander Permyakov. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

A Russian court on Wednesday upheld the life sentence of Alexander Permyakov, who was convicted of injuring pro-Kremlin writer Zakhar Prilepin and killing his driver in a car bombing in May 2023.

Prilepin, a prominent Russian author and outspoken supporter of the war against Ukraine, was injured in the attack, which killed his driver. Permyakov was sentenced in September on charges that included committing a "terrorist act," the state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported.

The court heard that Permyakov, who holds both Russian and Ukrainian citizenship, tracked Prilepin's movements and placed two explosive devices under the road near the writer's home in the Nizhny Novgorod region. Permyakov reportedly admitted in court that Ukraine's SBU security service had promised him $20,000 for assassinating Prilepin.

During the appeal hearing, Permyakov's defense highlighted his cooperation with investigators, including providing information about a hidden weapons stash and the location of an unexploded device. However, the court rejected the appeal, affirming that Permyakov would serve the first five years of his sentence in a prison, where conditions are harsher than in a penal colony.

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Moscow has accused Ukraine of orchestrating multiple attacks and assassinations targeting prominent figures inside Russia. Ukraine has not formally claimed responsibility for the attack on Prilepin, though SBU chief Vasyl Maliuk called the writer a "real war criminal" in a televised interview.

Maliuk claimed last year that the explosion left Prilepin with severe injuries, including damage to his pelvis and legs, and suggested he had lost his genitals. Prilepin, however, denied the latter claim, stating that while he suffered numerous fractures and a serious head injury, other assertions about his condition were false.

The 49-year-old writer is known for his novels inspired by his service with Russian forces in Chechnya and his membership in a banned nationalist group. He also fought alongside separatist forces in eastern Ukraine in 2014.

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Prilepin joined other pro-Kremlin figures in calling for the dismissal of cultural elites they deemed unpatriotic. In January 2023, he signed a contract to serve with the Russian National Guard (Rosgvardia) in Ukraine.

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