

Russian Judge Upholds 3-Year Jail Sentence for French Researcher

By [AFP](#)

February 24, 2025



French citizen Laurent Vinatier. **Yulia Morozova / TASS**

A Russian judge on Monday upheld a three-year prison sentence for French national Laurent Vinatier, one of several Westerners jailed by Russia since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

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," a crime punishable by up to five years in prison.

In October, a Russian court found him guilty of gathering information on the Russian military and violating the country's "foreign agent" law, a designation typically applied to Russian nationals.

"The sentence... against Laurent Vinatier is left unchanged," judge Tatyana Sokolova said after an appeal hearing, according to an AFP correspondent in the court.

Speaking in Russian via video link from prison, Vinatier admitted his guilt and expressed remorse. "Everything I did in Russia together with its representatives was only for the sake of peace," he said.

His lawyer, Oleg Besonov, argued that the sentence was "too severe," noting that Vinatier has two dependent children, one of whom is disabled.

Vinatier has maintained that he was unaware he needed to register as a "foreign agent" a label widely used to suppress Kremlin critics.

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