

Russia Frees Journalist Convicted of 'Justifying Terrorism'

By [AFP](#)

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Russian journalist and writer Nadezhda Kevorkova after a hearing at Moscow's Basmanny District Court in May 2024. **Alexander Ryumin / TASS**

A Russian journalist who faced six years in prison after being convicted of "justifying terrorism" was released with a fine on Wednesday in a rare lenient ruling.

A judge at a military court in Moscow found Nadezhda Kevorkova guilty of "publicly justifying and calling for terrorism" in posts, Russian news agencies reported. The respected 66-year-old journalist specializes in the Middle East.

But judge Roman Vladimirov released her in the courtroom with a 600,000-ruble (\$6,900) fine, reduced from 700,000 rubles because she had been held in detention since last May.

The verdict came after Kevorkova's lawyer told the court that the father of Alina Kabaeva — a former Olympic gymnast widely rumored to be the partner of President Vladimir Putin — had

offered to be her guarantor, the Mediazona website reported.

Marat Kabayev heads an association of Muslim entrepreneurs, it reported.

Kevorkova's family members wept and embraced after the verdict, video posted by the RusNews outlet showed.

"I don't even know what to say. Thanks to everyone," her son, Vasily Polonsky, also a journalist, wrote on Telegram.

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The sentence, issued by a judge at Moscow's Second Western District court, came after prosecutors had demanded the judge issue a six-year prison sentence.

"In our days, a fine for such a charge can be considered an acquittal," her lawyer Kaloi Akhilgov told journalists outside court, the independent Mediazona news website, which monitors trials, wrote.

Posts on Taliban, Islamists

Kevorkova has written for Russia's top media outlets including Novaya Gazeta and has also written for pro-Kremlin media such as Russia Today.

She had pleaded not guilty to the charge.

Her trial opened Monday, with Kevorkova and her lawyers and prosecutors making their final statements Wednesday.

Kevorkova was detained in May last year and added by Russia to its list of "terrorists and extremists."

The accusation was based on two posts she wrote on Telegram: one from 2020 on the Taliban and a re-post from another journalist in 2018 about a 2005 Islamist raid on the Russian city of Nalchik.

The Taliban is officially banned by Moscow, though Russia has forged ties with the Islamist authorities that now govern Afghanistan.

Kevorkova's lawyer had asked the court to issue a non-custodial sentence for her post about the Taliban, in which she assessed positively the release of imprisoned fighters, Mediazona reported.

Although Putin in December signed a bill paving the way to removing the Taliban's "terrorist" designation, the label has not yet been lifted.

In July he called the group "allies in the fight against terrorism."

Kevorkova's defense team also asked the judge to acquit her over reposting another

journalist's words, Mediazona reported.

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