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Far East Court Rules to Keep Anti-Putin Shaman in High-Security Psychiatric Facility

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Alexander Gabyshev. **Social media**

A court in Far East Russia has denied a request to transfer anti-Putin shaman Alexander Gabyshev from a high-security psychiatric facility to a general hospital for the third time in two years, his lawyer said Friday.

The Ussuriysky District Court in the Primorye region made the ruling after a higher court in February overturned its December decision to grant the initial transfer request, according to lawyer Alexei Pryanishnikov.

Gabyshev, 56, was arrested in 2019, months after setting off by foot from his native republic of Sakha (Yakutia) to Moscow to "exorcize" Russian President Vladimir Putin.

He has spent most of the past six years in psychiatric hospitals, where Pryanishnikov said he has been subjected to life-threatening treatments.

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Pryanishnikov has previously said that independent medical experts attested to Gabyshev's mental sanity and urged his transfer, only to be ignored by judges.

The court in Ussuriysk denied requests to transfer Gabyshev in December 2023 and May 2024.

Amnesty International and the Russian human rights group Memorial recognize Gabyshev as a political prisoner, with the former saying he "has been made an enemy of the state solely for voicing his dislike of Putin."

Committing political dissenters to psychiatric hospitals was a practice known as punitive psychiatry in the days of the Soviet Union. Up to the late 1980s, critics could be diagnosed with "sluggish schizophrenia" or forms of paranoia and locked up in institutions.

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