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Russia Adds Entrepreneur Kidnapped at Moscow Train Station to 'Terrorists and Extremists' List

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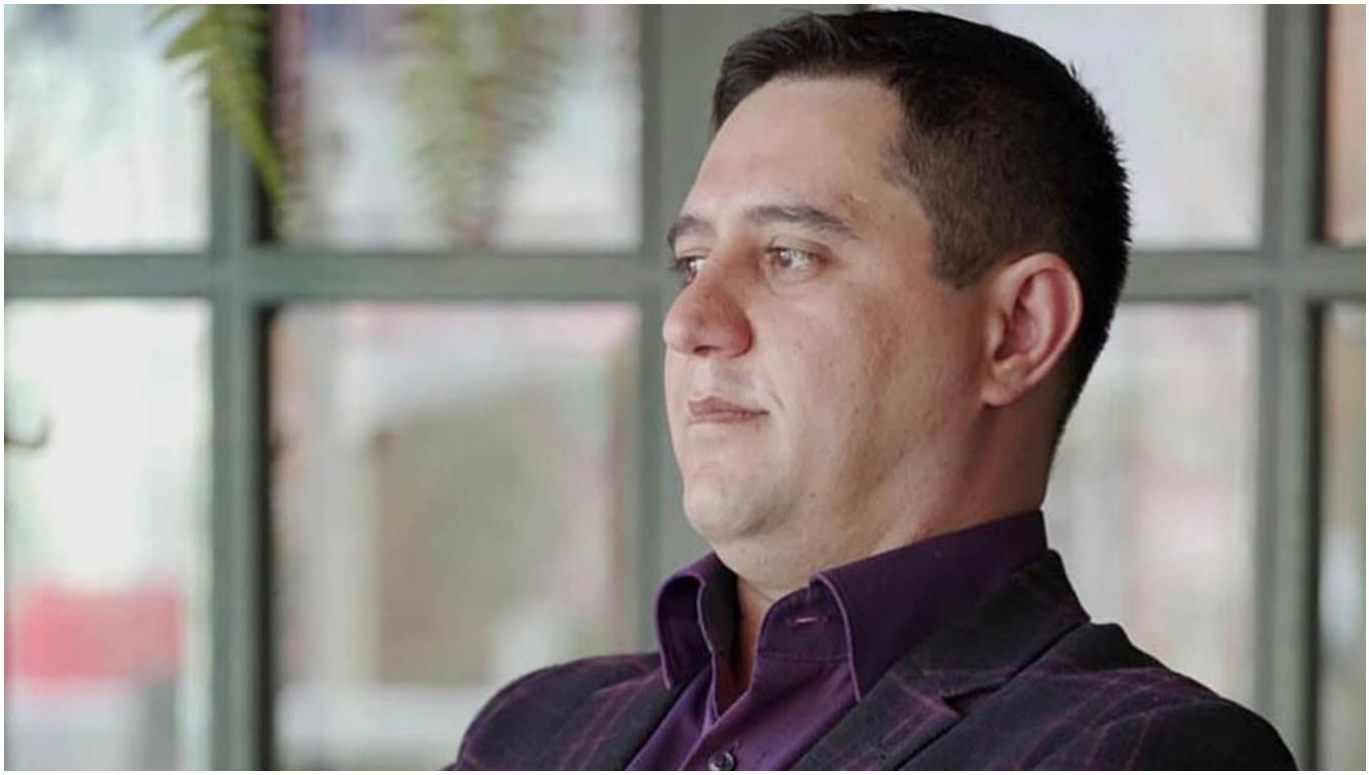

Areg Shchepikhin. **Social media**

Russia's financial watchdog Rosfinmonitoring added Russian-Armenian tech entrepreneur Areg Shchepikhin to its list of "terrorists and extremists," weeks after he was abducted in broad daylight from a Moscow train station.

Shchepikhin was filmed being forced into an SUV on June 3 by men believed to be ethnic Chechens, a day after he posted an expletive-laden Instagram video criticizing Chechens and Islam. Chechen authorities claimed he had not been abducted but "detained by law enforcement officers."

He was released later that night, only to be arrested by the police on charges of offending religious beliefs and inciting extremism. His alleged abductors were charged with kidnapping and abuse of office but have reportedly avoided arrest, with their whereabouts remaining unknown.

On June 26, the Moscow City Court rejected Shchepikhin's appeal against pre-trial detention. He reportedly expressed "deep regret" for his online comments and apologized "to all Russian citizens, especially residents of the Caucasus."

He faces up to six years in prison if convicted.

Rosfinmonitoring's list includes more than 17,800 individuals and over 800 organizations. The designation allows the authorities to freeze bank accounts and block access to financial services without a court ruling.

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