The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Military Court Jails Exiled Writer Boris Akunin 14 Years in Absentia

July 14, 2025



Boris Akunin. **DedaSasha (CC BY-SA 4.0)**

A Moscow military court on Monday sentenced exiled novelist Boris Akunin to 14 years in prison on charges of justifying terrorism, facilitating terrorist activity, and violating the country's "foreign agent" laws.

Akunin, a popular novelist and Kremlin critic, was tried in absentia and has not lived in Russia since 2014. He was added to Russia's list of "terrorists and extremists" in January 2024, shortly after authorities labeled him a "foreign agent" and issued a warrant for his arrest.

Russian prosecutors, who earlier on Monday had requested an 18-year prison sentence for the writer, accused Akunin of justifying terrorism in a February 2024 Telegram post in which he voiced support for a "revolution" in Russia.

He was also accused of "facilitating" terrorist activity during a recorded phone call with pro-Kremlin pranksters Vovan and Lexus, who posed as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Culture Minister Oleksandr Tkachenko. In the call, Akunin expressed support for Ukraine.

In addition, authorities said Akunin failed to mark dozens of Telegram posts published in early 2025 with the legally required "foreign agent" disclaimer.

Prosecutors had also requested a 400,000 ruble ($5,100) fine and a five-year ban on operating websites after his release from prison. A judge ruled to ban him from operating websites for four years after his release.

Sentences issued in absentia are typically enforced only if the defendant is extradited to Russia.

Related article: Russia's Spy Agency Accuses NATO of Dragging Moldova Into Conflict

Akunin, whose real name is Grigory Chkhartishvili, responded to the sentence in a sardonic post on Telegram, saying, "That's it, dear internet readers. This is goodbye for a long time. The military court is not only fair, but swift. I've been slapped with 14 years, plus another four years of being banned from running websites."

According to the state-run news agency TASS, a court-appointed attorney said Akunin had pleaded not guilty. But the writer denied authorizing any lawyer to represent him and dismissed the legitimacy of the proceedings.

"As is often the case, TASS is lying. I don't 'plead not guilty.' I don't recognize their court," he wrote on Telegram.

Only one witness for the prosecution appeared at Monday's hearing in Moscow's Second Western District Military Court, the exiled news outlet Mediazona reported.

Akunin has been an outspoken critic of the Kremlin, opposing both Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. He co-founded "True Russia," a platform supporting Ukrainian refugees and anti-war Russians in exile.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/07/14/military-court-jails-exiled-writer-boris-akunin-14-years-in-absentia-a89805