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Kaliningrad Doctors Sentenced to Prison Again After Retrial in Premature Infant Death Case

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Elina Sushkevich (left) and Yelena Belaya (right). **Mikhail Tereshchenko / TASS**

A Moscow court on Monday sentenced a former Kaliningrad hospital chief and an anesthesiologist to at least nine years in prison each in a high-profile infanticide case.

Yelena Belaya, former acting chief physician of Kaliningrad Maternity Hospital No. 4, and anesthesiologist Elina Sushkevich were found guilty of administering a lethal dose of magnesium sulfate to simulate the stillbirth of a premature infant in November 2018. Investigators said Belaya was motivated by a desire to maintain the hospital's favorable infant mortality statistics, which could impact her career prospects.

Both women denied the charges. The case has drawn widespread attention and protests of solidarity from healthcare workers.

A Kaliningrad jury acquitted Belaya and Sushkevich in 2020. That decision was overturned,

and the trial was moved to Moscow for retrial.

In 2022, the Moscow Regional Court convicted them, sentencing Belaya to nine and a half years and Sushkevich to nine years in prison. However, an appeals court overturned the sentences in December 2024 and ordered a review.

In late July 2025, a Moscow Regional Court jury again found them guilty of murder. The trial had been marked by allegations that a judge attempted to influence jurors toward a guilty verdict in April 2023.

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On Monday, the court imposed the same prison sentences as in 2022, fully granting the prosecution's request, according to the Kommersant business newspaper.

Under Russian law, time spent in pre-trial detention counts as one and a half days toward the sentence for each day served, while two days under house arrest count as one day. Defense attorneys estimate that nearly six years will be credited toward their sentences, with Sushkevich eligible to request parole in two months, RBC news reported.

The court also ordered both women to pay 1 million rubles ($12,500) each to the victim, Zarimkhon Akhmedova, a citizen of Uzbekistan, in a civil suit, plus 247,000 rubles ($3,100) each for procedural costs.

Sushkevich's lawyer told RBC he believes the guilty verdict could be overturned again.

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