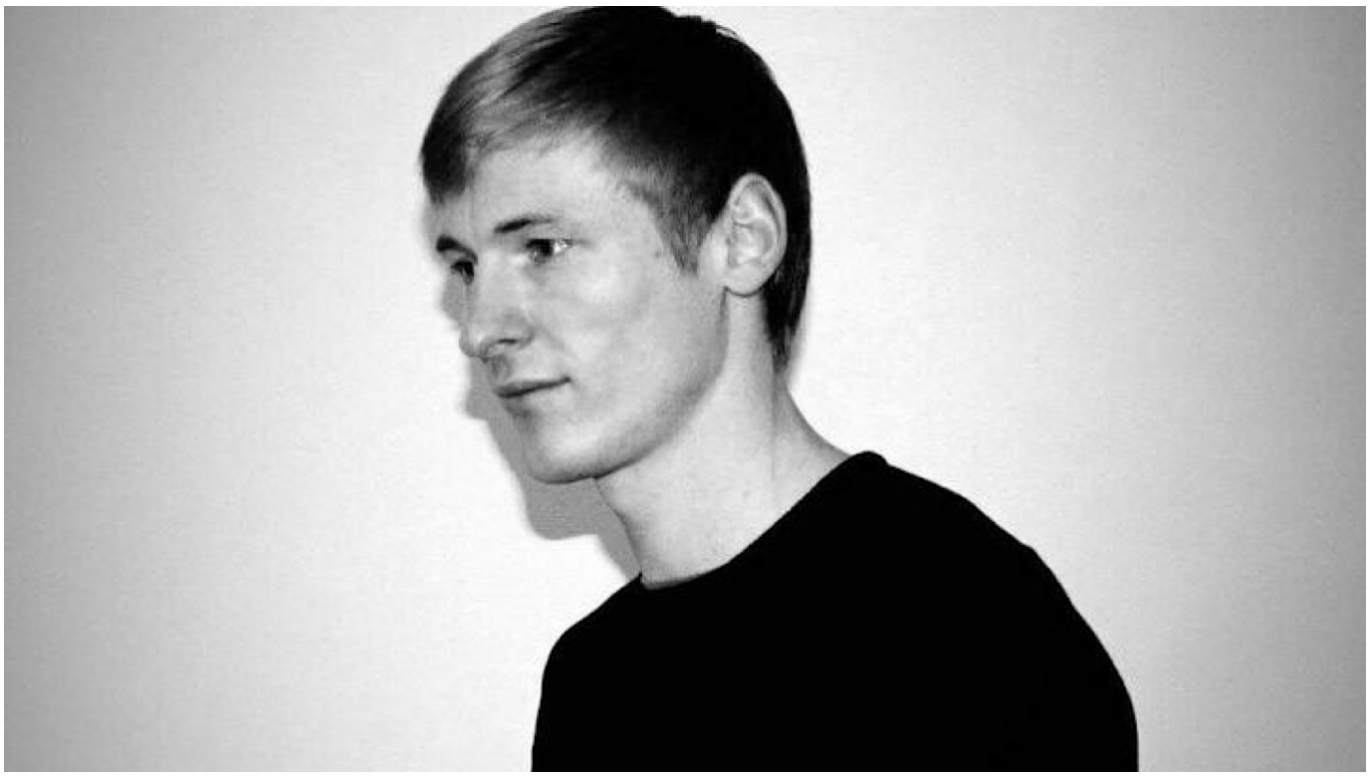
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Political Prisoner Dies in Belarusian Jail

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Andrei Podnebenny. **Social Media**

A Russian man serving a prison sentence in Belarus on what government critics call politically motivated charges has died, the rights group Viasna said Monday.

Andrei Podnebenny, 36, was arrested in late 2021 during a sweeping crackdown on dissent after President Aleksandr Lukashenko claimed victory in a disputed election the year before.

A Belarusian court sentenced him to 16 years and eight months in 2022 for running an "extremist" Telegram channel, vandalizing dozens of trolleybuses and setting fire to a prison authority's car.

His mother, Valentina Podnebennaya, said he died last Wednesday in a prison in the eastern city of Mogilev. "Some bastard took away his freedom and then his life," she wrote on Facebook. The cause of death was not disclosed.

Podnebenny is thought to be the ninth political prisoner to have died in Belarus since 2020,

according to Viasna, which had recognized him as a political prisoner. The group says nearly 1,200 such prisoners remain behind bars.

“Most of these deaths resulted from a lack of medical help amid inhumane, cruel, dangerous, illegal treatment of political prisoners,” Belarusian opposition figure Valery Kavaleuski wrote on X.

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