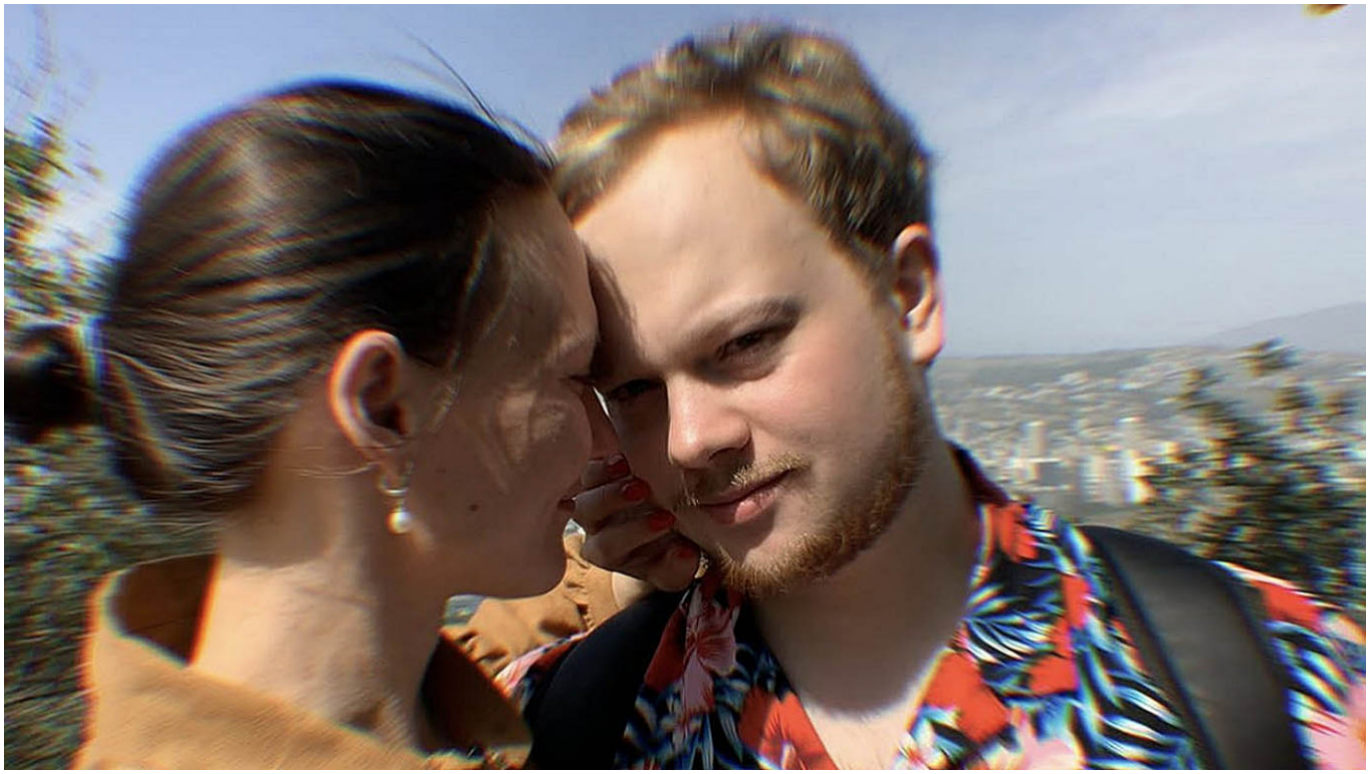
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Georgia Jails Russian Protest Couple 8.5 Years on Drug Charges

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Anastasia Zinovkina and Artyom Gribulya. © **Instagram**

A court in Georgia sentenced a Russian couple to eight and a half years in prison on drug charges, local media reported Friday.

Anastasia Zinovkina, 31, and her partner, Artyom Gribul, 25, were arrested in December 2024 during protests against the ruling Georgian Dream party's contested election victory and its decision to delay talks on EU membership.

Prosecutors accused them of acquiring and possessing large quantities of drugs, saying police found 16 grams of the synthetic stimulant alpha-PVP during searches.

Both denied the charges, alleging that police planted the drugs. "Nine months ago, a crime was committed against me and Anastasia. This crime continues to this day," Gribul was quoted as saying in court by the local news website OC Media.

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Another Russian arrested at the time, Anton Chechin, received the same sentence earlier this month on identical charges, which he also called fabricated.

Zinovkina declared a hunger strike in court on Friday, demanding the release of both men, according to the news website Civil Georgia.

A fourth Russian, Denis Kulanin, was sentenced in June to two years in prison for damaging a police car during protests in March.

The Kremlin has distanced itself from the cases, saying in December it had no information on the arrested Russians but claimed they had “obviously” broken Georgian law.

Georgia became a major destination for Russians who fled the country after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

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