The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Samara Court Sentences Exiled Cult Leader Svetlana Lada-Rus to 8 Years in Prison

November 14, 2025



Svetlana Lada-Rus. **@S_Lada_Rus**

A court in the southwestern Samara region on Friday sentenced exiled cult leader and fringe opposition figure Svetlana Lada-Rus to eight years in prison in absentia.

Lada-Rus was found guilty of fraud, creating an organization that infringes on the identity and rights of Russian citizens, as well as causing grievous bodily harm through negligence.

State prosecutors said groups created by Lada-Rus presented themselves as traditional-medicine centers and political organizations but in reality operated as "destructive communities" that encouraged followers to abandon their "civic responsibilities."

They also accused her of imposing a religious doctrine and requiring daily rituals and ceremonies at her home in the Samara region beginning in 2006, actions they said "destabilized the emotional state" of her adherents.

Lada-Rus, who is designated a "foreign agent" and now lives abroad, earlier slammed the case against her as "absurd" and "slanderous."

On Friday, she denounced the Samara court's jail sentence, writing in a post on Telegram: I do not recognize and do not believe that this government, which colonized us in 1993, has the right to judge me or anyone else. This system was created to eliminate those who prevent it from robbing, killing, and destroying the country."

Related article: Two Fighter Pilots Killed in Jet Crash in Republic of Karelia

A music teacher by training, Lada-Rus first gained attention in the 1990s after opening an occult healing center in Samara. She later ventured into politics, running for the State Duma in 2003 and attempting a presidential bid in 2012 with backing from her own party, The Will, which was outlawed as extremist in 2016.

Her ideology blends denial of the Soviet Union's dissolution, Russian nationalism, anti-vaccine rhetoric and reptilian conspiracy theories. She has also accused Russia's ruling elite of being corrupted by British intelligence services.

In recent months, dozens of her supporters have been subjected to police searches and arrests across the country, including in the republic of Altai, where one follower, Aruna Arna, emerged as a leader of protests against controversial municipal reforms.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/11/14/samara-court-sentences-exiled-cult-leader-svetlana-lada-rus-to-8-years-in-prison-a91127