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Russia Tightens Legal Penalties for Terror and Sabotage Acts Among Minors

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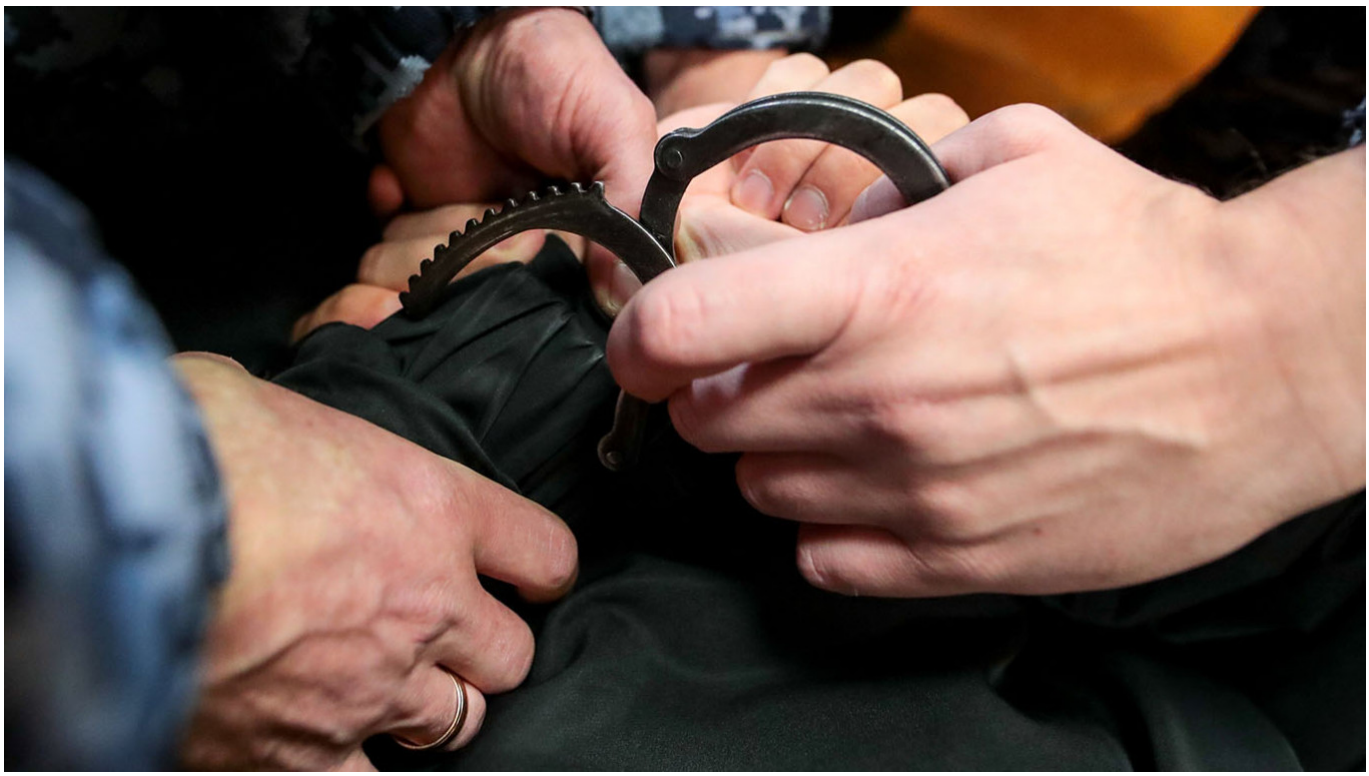

Vasily Kuzmichenok / Moskva News Agency

President Vladimir Putin on Monday approved a package of legal amendments that tighten penalties for acts of sabotage, which have soared in numbers since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The measures lower the age at which minors can be charged with sabotage or terrorism to 14 from 16. They also abolish statutes of limitations for sabotage-related crimes, bar courts from issuing suspended sentences in such cases and restrict parole until at least three-quarters of a sentence is served.

Likewise, individuals who try to recruit minors for carrying out sabotage and terrorist acts can now face up to life in prison.

Lawmakers, who passed the amendments almost unanimously last week, cast the changes as a safeguard against foreign intelligence services recruiting Russian youths.

But critics, including some Communist Party members, warned that the legislation risks criminalizing children rather than preventing radicalization.

State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin defended the measures as “humane,” saying they shield minors from being “dragged into” sabotage networks.

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Russian courts have convicted at least 158 minors on terrorism and sabotage charges since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine began more than three years ago, many in cases involving arson attacks on military enlistment offices and railway infrastructure.

Law enforcement officials say some teenagers were motivated by payments from those ordering the attacks.

An increasing number of minors have also been sentenced to prison or juvenile facilities for voicing opposition to the war.

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