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Ex-Khabarovsk Governor Furgal Given Additional 23-Year Prison Sentence

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Sergei Furgal in court. **Sergei Karpukhin / TASS**

A judge in Moscow has handed former Khabarovsk region Governor Sergei Furgal a new 23-year prison term, adding to the 22-year sentence he is already serving on double murder charges, his support group said Wednesday.

Furgal rose to prominence in 2018 after defeating the Kremlin-backed incumbent in the Far Eastern region's gubernatorial race. His 2020 arrest sparked months of large-scale protests, and the murder accusations against him have been widely viewed as politically motivated.

Despite the public outcry, a Moscow region court in 2022 sentenced Furgal, a former timber and scrap metal trader, to 22 years in a maximum-security prison for allegedly organizing contract killings.

On Wednesday, a judge from Moscow's Babushkinsky District Court convicted Furgal on a new set of charges, including creating an organized crime group, abuse of power, large-scale

fraud, money laundering and illegal business activity.

The case centers on four bank loans totaling 2.67 billion rubles ($34.5 million) that were issued to companies linked to Furgal's businesses. His support group said one loan had been fully repaid and payments on the others were being made on schedule, including one installment sent just days before his arrest.

Furgal denied all charges.

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The judge issued a combined sentence of 25 years in a maximum-security facility by merging the new term with Furgal's previous conviction, according to his supporters.

Eight other defendants in the case received sentences ranging from four years suspended to 20 years in prison.

President Vladimir Putin removed Furgal from office in 2020 "due to loss of confidence" and appointed Mikhail Degtyarev, a more Kremlin-friendly member of the same nationalist Liberal Democratic Party, to replace him. Degtyarev now serves as Sports Minister.

A Khabarovsk court last year banned the Russian phrase "I'm/We're Furgal," which has been used by the ex-governor's supporters, labeling it an "extremist movement."

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