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Prisoners' Rights Activist Arrested in Yekaterinburg and Charged With Treason

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Alexei Sokolov in court. **Social media**

A judge in the city of Yekaterinburg has ordered local human rights activist Alexei Sokolov to be placed in pre-trial detention after he was arrested and charged with treason, the exiled news outlet Mediazona reported Thursday.

Sokolov, who for years has campaigned against torture and other ill-treatment of prisoners in Russia, had told reporters before the court ruling that authorities accuse him of sharing information about prison abuse with "foreign organizations."

According to the activist, Russian authorities are treating that information sharing as a "threat to national security."

Sokolov said he had been gathering information for the UN's Committee Against Torture to file complaints in Russia.

Treason charges in Russia carry a maximum sentence of life in prison for men. Women can

face up to 20 years for treason.

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Law enforcement authorities arrested Sokolov on Tuesday and searched his home as part of a separate investigation into his alleged involvement in an organization designated in Russia as "undesirable."

It was not immediately clear what organization the activist is suspected of being connected to, but his own rights organization, called Legal Foundation, is not banned in Russia.

On the same day as Sokolov's arrest, police arrested two other rights activists in the Urals region — Roman Kachanov and Larisa Zakharova, who are both members of the organization Ural Human Rights Defenders.

Those two activists, who are also involved in prisoner advocacy, were charged with being connected to an "undesirable organization."

Separately, the Leninsky District Court in Yekaterinburg is hearing another case against Sokolov for "repeatedly displaying extremist symbols" on his Telegram channel. According to Mediazona, the symbol in question is the Facebook logo.

Russia designated Facebook's parent company Meta as a "terrorist and extremist" organization in 2022 after it was accused of "Russophobia" for refusing to remove content that called for the killing of Russian soldiers amid the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

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