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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

State Prosecutor Requests Nearly 6-Year Prison Sentence for Comedian Accused of Insulting Veterans

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Artemy Ostanin. **SOTAvision**

A Russian state prosecutor has requested a prison sentence of nearly six years for stand-up comedian Artemy Ostanin, who was arrested last year following accusations he insulted war veterans during a stand-up performance.

Ostanin was arrested in Belarus in March 2025 after Call of the People, a group known for publicly denouncing Russians, filed a police complaint accusing him of mocking veterans who had lost limbs fighting in the war against Ukraine.

The comedian has denied that his joke was aimed at war veterans. Footage of the stand-up performance that triggered the backlash suggests the joke was taken out of context.

Ostanin was later charged with inciting hatred. He was also designated as a terrorist and extremist in June.

Last week, Ostanin was formally indicted at Moscow's Meshchansky District Court. He now faces a second charge of "insulting the religious feelings of believers" after the authorities discovered a joke he previously made about Jesus.

During a court hearing on Tuesday, Ostanin accused Belarusian law enforcement officers of physically abusing him during his arrest last March, saying he suffered a spinal fracture before being transferred to Russia for trial.

At that same hearing, a state prosecutor asked that Ostanin be found guilty of both charges and be sentenced to five years and 11 months in a medium-security prison. The prosecutor also requested that the comedian be fined 300,000 rubles ($3,900).

The judge overseeing the trial scheduled the next hearing date for Feb. 2.

During the hearing, Ostanin made a marriage proposal to his girlfriend Valeria Naumova, who is a witness in the case.

The news outlet Mediazona reported that none of the individuals in the case who claimed to have been offended by Ostanin's jokes attended Tuesday's hearing.

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