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St. Petersburg Court Jails Former Members of Youth Activist Group Vesna

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A judge in St. Petersburg on Wednesday sentenced six former members of the democratic youth organization Vesna to prison sentences of varying lengths after they were found guilty of charges including extremism and spreading "war fakes."

The activists, including one woman and five men, were no longer members of Vesna at the time of their arrests in June 2023.

Vesna, which means spring in Russian, was founded in St. Petersburg in 2013. After the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, it staged anti-war rallies in Russian cities, shortly after which it was designated as an "extremist" organization.

The human rights group Memorial recognized the six former members sentenced to jail on Wednesday as political prisoners.

St. Petersburg's City Court found all six guilty of organizing an extremist group, mass unrest,

disseminating “fakes” about the Russian army, calling for actions that undermine national security and rehabilitating Nazism.

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The longest prison sentence of 12 years was handed to Anna Arkhipova, followed by 11 years for Yan Ksenzhepolsky and 10 years for Vasily Neustroyev.

Pavel Sinelnikov was sentenced to 7.5 years in prison, while Yevgeny Zateev and Valentin Khoroshenin each received six years and two months.

State prosecutors had requested prison sentences between eight years and 13 years.

The former activists initially pleaded not guilty in October 2024, but last July, Khoroshenin provided a “full confession” and testified against his co-defendants.

Arkhipova later said that Khoroshenin had told her after giving his confession that “what really matters isn’t what actually happened, but how the investigator wrote it up.”

Vesna declined a request for comment when contacted by The Moscow Times.

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