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Culinary Historian Pavel Syutkin Sentenced to 6 Years in Prison Over Bucha Posts

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Pavel Syutkin. **Vasily Kuzmichenok / Moskva News Agency**

A Moscow judge on Tuesday sentenced culinary historian and former Moscow Times columnist Pavel Syutkin to six years in prison on charges of spreading "fake news" about the Russian military.

State prosecutors sought an eight-year prison sentence for Syutkin over Telegram posts about alleged atrocities committed against civilians in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha during the opening weeks of Russia's full-scale invasion. Russia denies committing war crimes in Bucha.

A judge at Moscow's Zyuzinsky District Court found Syutkin guilty of spreading "false information" about the Russian Armed Forces, the court's press service said in a statement on Telegram.

In addition to the six-year prison term, the court banned Syutkin from managing websites for

four years.

Syutkin's attorney Yevgeniya Grigoryeva told the state-run news agency TASS that the defense plans to appeal the ruling, which she said will likely be heard in the Moscow City Court.

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The trial was held behind closed doors. Ahead of the verdict, Syutkin told reporters the secrecy was maintained due to an FSB witness in the case.

"But that's just the formal pretext. I think the real reason is that the court itself feels some discomfort about handing down a sentence in this kind of political case," Syutkin told reporters in a video shared by the Mediazona outlet.

"This verdict is honestly a certain mark of quality for the work I've been doing, an effort... aimed at reviving civil society in our country," Syutkin said in another video, followed by applause from those who went to hear the verdict in court.

Syutkin was arrested last October and added to the Russian financial monitoring agency Rosfinmonitoring's list of "terrorists and extremists," a move that froze his bank accounts.

The Nobel Peace Prize-winning human rights organization Memorial has designated Syutkin a political prisoner.

He has published several books on the history of Russian and Soviet cuisine and hosted programs on national television and radio devoted to the history of food. In 2015, Syutkin represented Russia as an official ambassador at the World Expo in Milan.

Syutkin and his wife, Olga, wrote a weekly cooking column for The Moscow Times until Russian authorities banned the news outlet as "undesirable" in July 2024.

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