

IT Worker Jailed 13 Years in Russia After Binance Revealed He Donated Money to Ukraine

By [Reuters](#)

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REUTERS / Dado Ruvic

A Russian IT specialist has been sentenced to 13 years in jail on charges of financing terrorism after the cryptocurrency exchange Binance passed details to authorities in Moscow of his donations to Ukrainian fundraising campaigns.

A judge at the 2nd Western District Military Court on Monday found 49-year-old Yury Belenky guilty of the charges and sentenced him to three years in prison, plus an additional 10 years in a strict-regime penal colony, according to a court statement.

Belenky, who has a Bulgarian residence permit, was arrested in September last year when he flew to Moscow for a visit and has been in police custody ever since. He denied the charges, according to the court.

Documents showed that Binance provided Russian investigators with Belenky's transaction history last year, including records of transfers to Ukrainian fundraising campaigns, in response to a Russian request, and that the records were instrumental in prosecuting him, Reuters reported in August.

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According to the records, Belenky sent more than \$700 to the Ukrainian military in response to an online appeal by Arkady Babchenko, an exiled Russian critic of the Kremlin who supports Ukraine. Some payments went to the Azov Brigade.

"The response from Binance serves as key evidence in the criminal case against Belenkiy," said Yevgeny Smirnov, a lawyer with the rights group First Department, which helps people facing politically motivated charges in Russia.

Rights advocates who monitor such prosecutions say dozens of Russians have been convicted in recent years for donations made through cryptocurrency platforms to causes that authorities later classified as extremist or terrorist. Many used cryptocurrency because they believed it would keep their identities secret.

Asked on Tuesday about the sentence, Binance referred Reuters to a previous statement in which it said the exchange "does not make or enforce the laws of any jurisdiction, determine charges or decide how any government uses information in legal proceedings."

Binance said it does not comment on confidential law-enforcement requests or individual cases.

A lawyer who specialises in crypto regulation, Mike Bystrov, told Reuters in August that Binance, which left Russia in 2023 following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent imposition of Western sanctions, had been under no obligation to provide Belenky's data.

He said it might, in fact, have had obligations under European Union data-protection law not to do so because of Belenky's Bulgarian residency status.

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