

Russia: 22-year jail sentence for former journalist is 'absurdly harsh'



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His lawyers said his information was all acquired from open sources

'This prosecution had absolutely nothing to do with justice' - Natalia Prilutskaya

Responding to news that a court in Moscow has sentenced Ivan Safronov - a former journalist and advisor to the head of the national space agency Roskosmos - to 22 years in jail for "high treason", Natalia Prilutskaya, Amnesty International's Russia Researcher, said:

"The absurdly harsh sentence meted out to Ivan Safronov symbolises the perilous reality faced by journalists in Russia today. "It also exposes the failings of the Russian justice system and the impunity enjoyed by state agencies, who routinely fabricate cases with little or no evidence to support them. "Since Ivan Safronov's arrest in July 2020, his lawyers have been repeatedly obstructed by the authorities. "The investigation into his case and the trial itself were marred by numerous procedural violations. It quickly became clear to anyone following the case that this prosecution had absolutely nothing to do with justice. "Ivan Safronov was tried solely for his journalistic work. His only 'crime' was collecting information from open sources and being acquainted with and befriending foreigners. The Russian authorities must urgently quash his conviction and sentence and must be immediately released."

Earlier today, Moscow City Court sentenced Ivan Safronov to 22 years in a strict regime penal colony after finding him guilty of two counts of "state treason". Safronov, who

previously worked as a reporter for Kommersant and Vedomosti, was arrested on 7 July 2020. He was charged with “state treason” for allegedly sharing sensitive state information with two foreign nationals when working as journalist. Lawyers representing Safronov maintain that all information he collected was acquired from - and remains available from - open sources. Political scientist Demuri Voronin, one of the two people who allegedly received sensitive information, admitted in court that he had been a false witness against Safronov.

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