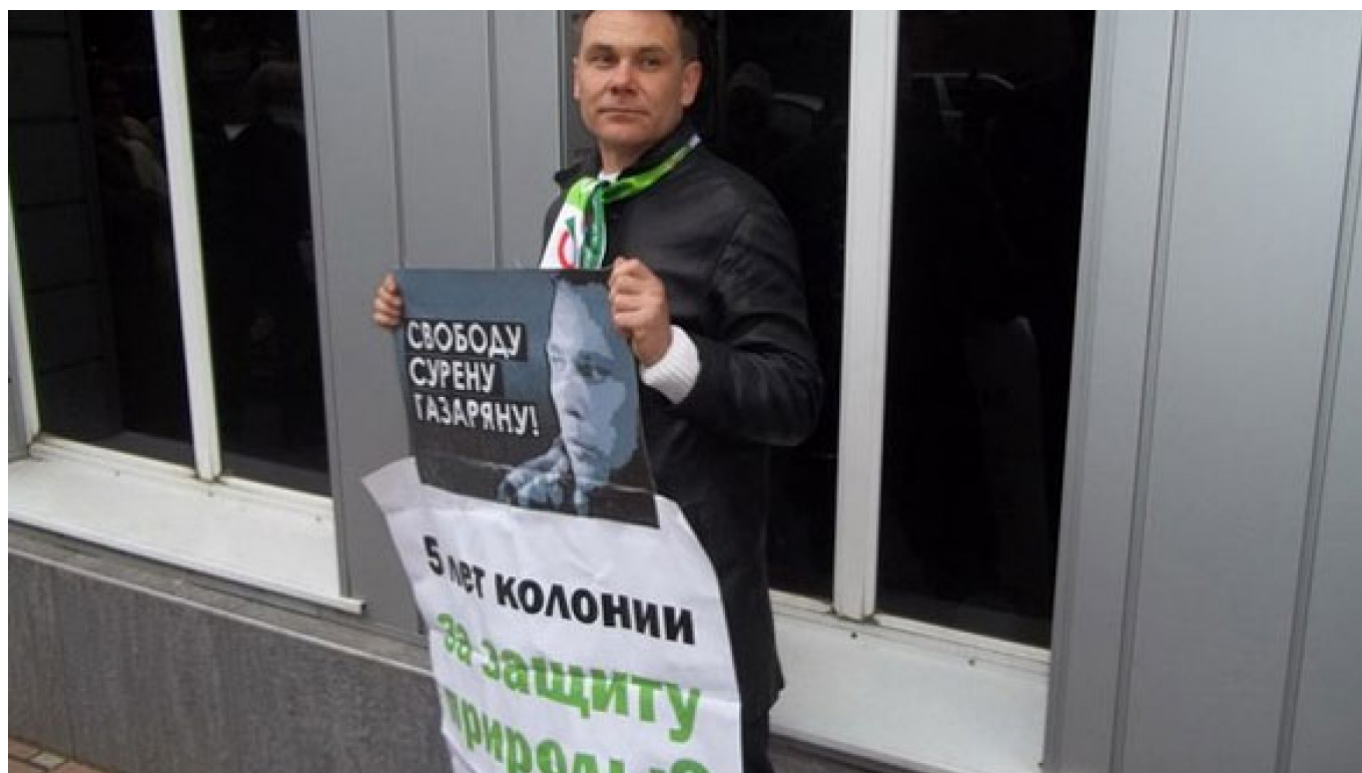


Olympic Committee Asks Russia to Justify 3-Year Sentence for Environmental Activist

By [The Moscow Times](#)

February 14, 2014



Evgeny holding a poster protesting environmental damage in the run-up to the Olympic Games.

e.vitishko

The International Olympic Committee and the European Union have asked Russia to explain a three-year prison sentence it handed an activist who criticized the environmental impact of Olympic construction in Sochi.

IOC spokesman Mark Adams said Thursday that the organization had "asked Sochi for further clarification" about a court's decision to convert a suspended sentence for Yevgeny Vitishko into a prison term, news reports said. However, the IOC considered the case to be unrelated to the Games, Adams added.

Vitishko was found guilty of "deliberate destruction of property" for spray-painting the fence

that surrounded a property reportedly owned by a local governor, and received a suspended sentence in 2012. This week, a court converted the sentence to a prison term.

The EU delegation to Russia issued a statement on Thursday, calling the sentence "disproportionate" and apparently "aimed at preventing Mr. Vitishko from presenting his report on the environmental impact of the Olympic Games."

"We reiterate the priority we attach to Russia respecting its international human rights commitments on freedom of assembly, expression and association, before, during and after the Sochi games."

Human Rights Watch and other organizations have called the prosecution politically motivated.

The suspended sentence included a travel ban, but Vitishko filed for permission to go to Sochi from his nearby hometown of Tuapse.

He was planning to leave Tuapse last week to present a new environmental report in Sochi, but was arrested and convicted on hooliganism charges for swearing at a bus stop.

Also see:

[Sochi Activist Sent to Prison For 3 Years](https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/02/14/olympic-committee-asks-russia-to-justify-3-year-sentence-for-environmental-activist-a32104)

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