

Police Detain Man in Sochi For Protesting Jailing of Environmental Activist

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Police in Sochi have detained a man for protesting against the jailing of an activist who criticized the environmental cost of Olympic construction, a news report has said.

David Khakim was led away by police in Sochi after holding a one-man rally in support of Yevgeny Vitishko, an environmental activist who was sentenced to three years in prison last week.

Khakim, who protested in front of a monument depicting the five-ring Olympic Games logo, was sentenced to 30 hours of community service, Reuters reported. He planned to appeal the verdict, his lawyer Alexander Popkov said.

Russia has banned protests in Sochi for the duration of the Games, except for those rallies that are held in a specially designated area and receive advance approval from the Interior

Ministry.

Russian and international organizations have also called for the release of Vitishko, an activist with the Environmental Watch on the North Caucasus, whose jail term is widely seen as punishment for his reports exposing the damage from Sochi Olympics construction.

The International Olympic Committee and the European Union have asked Russia to explain the harsh sentence, and Human Rights Watch and other organizations have said Vitishko's prosecution was politically motivated.

Vitishko received a suspended sentence in 2012 for spray-painting the fence of a local governor's property, but a court converted it to a prison term last week. The environmentalist had tried to travel to Sochi to present a new environmental report, but in doing so broke the terms of his earlier parole. Vitishko's lawyer said his client had filed an official request to his probation officers for permission to travel to Sochi.

A fellow environmentalist said in a Twitter message this week that Vitishko had started a hunger strike to protest against the charges and sentencing.

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