

Court Bans Video of Karelian Activist Calling For Secession From Russia

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Vladimir Zavarkin

A court in Russia's northern city of Petrozavodsk has labeled as extremist video footage of a speech given by a local politician in which he called for the Karelian republic's secession from Russia, the TASS news agency reported Friday.

Vladimir Zavarkin, a municipal deputy in the town of Suoyarvi, gave a speech in May in which he criticized the Kremlin for failing to address local concerns and proposed staging a referendum.

“If Russia doesn't need Karelia — let's secede. That would be the most honest!” he said, according to footage of the speech uploaded to YouTube.

The court's ruling on Friday makes the video of Zavarkin's speech and its distribution illegal. Russia's media watchdog Roskomnadzor will block access to the video on YouTube, the report said. Footage of the speech was no longer available on YouTube late on Friday but could still be accessed on Russia's social networking site VKontakte.

Zavarkin, who was not present at the court hearing, has been accused of inciting separatism, a charge that carries a sentence of up to four years in prison.

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