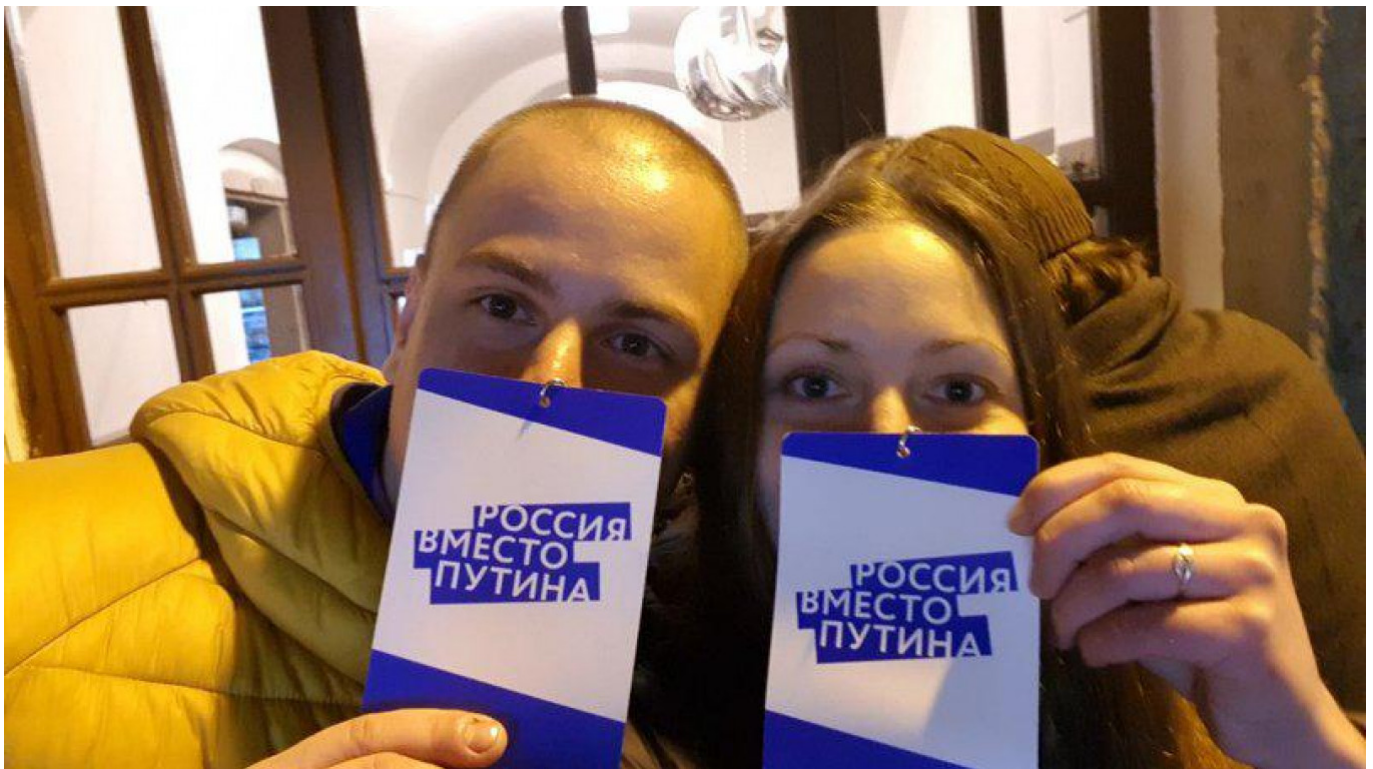


Two Opposition Activists Handed 10-Year Prison Sentences

August 12, 2021



Lia Milushkina is a former head of the Open Russia movement in Pskov. Pictured at an anti-Putin conference with her husband Arytom Milushkin. [Khodorkovsky.com](https://www.khodorkovsky.com)

Two Russian opposition activists have been sentenced to more than a decade in prison in a [case](#) critics say is politically motivated.

Lia Milushkina, the former head of Open Russia, an activist movement associated with exiled oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, in Russia's Pskov region, was handed a 10.5-year sentence Thursday for selling an illegal substance, the independent TV Dozhd news outlet [reported](#).

Her husband Arytom Milushkin, who was also involved with Open Russia, was sentenced to 11 years on similar charges.

The sentences are some of the heaviest that have been handed down to Russian activists in recent years and come amid a wave of repression against independent media outlets and civil society groups.

Embed:

Extremely painful to watch. Open Russian coordinator from Pskov Artem Milushkin gets 11 years in prison on drug charges, his wife Liya Milushkina gets 10.5 years. They claim police threatened to plant drugs on them for organizing political rallies and then made good on threat. <https://t.co/9A3frHrvQq>

— Andrew Roth (@Andrew__Roth) [August 12, 2021](#)

Russian authorities previously declared Open Russia an undesirable organization in Russia, outlawing its activities. The group, and several affiliates, formally [disbanded](#) in May to reduce the risks of supporters and former staff members facing jail time due to their association.

Milushkina and her husband were arrested in January 2019 following raids of a number of Khordorkovsky-linked figures in Pskov and other cities. Prosecutors [charged](#) them with drug dealing and put Milshukina under house arrest, while her husband was initially detained in jail. Her arrest, along with that of other female activists, sparked protests in a number of Russian cities in February 2019.

Critics [say](#) the charges have been fabricated and are designed to silence those who oppose the Kremlin and President Vladimir Putin.

"This is a political case," Milushkin said during the trial in 2019. "I do not consider myself guilty. I did not sell drugs. I organized rallies, and [the police] promised to plant drugs on me."

The judge issued a temporary delay on Milushkina's sentence coming into force until 2024, citing the couple's young children, BBC Russia [reported](#).

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