



Mikhail Kriger during the sentencing hearing in court, 17 May 2023 / Photo: Aleksandra Astakhova for Mediazona

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ARTICLES

“An active participant in anything good”: Anti-war activist sentenced to seven years

Mikhail Kriger has been active in democratic and anti-war movements since the end of the 1980s. He was sentenced to seven years in prison on charges of justification of terrorism and calls for extremism based on Facebook posts from nearly three years ago. In court, Mikhail declared that he does not regret his statements.

ОБ ЭТОМ НИКТО НЕ УЗНАЕТ

Если об этом никто не напишет. Подпишитесь на регулярные пожертвования ОВД-Инфо, чтобы плохие дела не оставались в тишине.

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Русская версия

ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN ANYTHING GOOD

«Well, the event was a success!» **says** Mikhail Kriger on a video after a fight at an anti-war picket. He's got a shirt, vest, and a black eye. Moscow, summer of 2016. Putin's invasion of Ukraine had already begun, but it was still possible to protest against the war. Anti-war pickets were given permission, but the police did not prevent attacks on them by supporters of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic. Kriger, full of physical strength, always stood up to bullies. In a video of a fight at another picket against the invasion of Ukraine Kriger **knocks out** a pro-Kremlin activist.

At the beginning of the 2000s Kriger organized protests against the Second Chechen War — they took place at the Pushkin Square in Moscow every Thursday for several years.

«We met at the protests against the Chechen War», says Anna Karetnikova, a human rights defender. «He tried to keep the picket up to par: we made flags, a website for spreading information, weekly reports about the war. We made the anti-war picket more accessible to the public than just a few people standing there once a week».

Later Karetnikova and Kriger worked with Moscow's Public Monitoring Commission and the democratic movement

«Solidarnost». Mikhail was co-organizing demonstrations in Moscow for many years. Kriger also collaborated with Russia's oldest and most recognized human rights organization Memorial, working for their Moscow Region office since 2021.

The Telegram channel «Freedom to Mikhail Kriger!» has published photographs of him at protests with the politicians [Ilya Yashin](#) and [Vladimir Kara-Murza](#), who were both recently sentenced to years in prison for opposing the war.

«Kriger became an active participant in anything he thought was good for the people. Organizing street actions was a regular activity for him. Someone writes texts, he organizes», Karetnikova describes.

Kriger took part in political movements since the end of the 1980s and was a member of the Moscow municipal council. Mikhail was awarded a medal for protecting the Moscow White House during the August 1991 coup attempt, but he [refused](#) to accept it because of his negative relationship with Russia's first president Boris Yeltsin.

Mikhail is an [electric welder](#) by profession, and during the Soviet era he took part in building the gigantic BAM railway. Kriger had a small land development company: the company's website [kriger.ru](#) is now offline.

In 2022 he worked with grocery deliveries: on 3 November in 2022 Mikhail was delivering an order to a restaurant in downtown Moscow when masked men detained him. On 6 November he was sent to a pre-trial detention centre.

A MATTER OF TIME

«His arrest was a matter of time. He wrote whatever came to his mind. For him it was important. Of course, he was aware that he may get arrested», says Anna Karetnikova.

The full-scale war in Ukraine was painful for Mikhail, as his family comes from the Ukrainian city of Dnipro. Staying in Russia, Mikhail was helping Ukrainian refugees and did not hide his attitude toward the war.



Mikhail Krieger at a “Solidarnost” picket against the war with Ukraine, Moscow, 3 May 2014 / Photo from the personal archive of Mikhail's associates

Although Kriger was not a widely known politician, dozens of supporters have visited his hearings. In the court he was **singing** Ukrainian songs with his well-trained voice.

The criminal case was **initiated** because of the two publications in Facebook that were made “no later than December 2020”. One of the publications was devoted to a couple from Kaliningrad that was **jailed for more than a decade** on high treason charges, for publishing a photo from their wedding in which one of the guests happened to be a member of the Russian intelligence. Kriger wrote: “In our country the [secret police] beasts have seized power. They are eating people and enjoying it”. In that same publication he called Mikhail Zhlobitsky, who **blew himself** up in Alkhangel'sk FSB [Federal Security Service] building in 2018, a hero.

The prosecution believed that Kriger's publication "according to the reference of the research contains a combination of linguistic and psychological characteristics of justification of M.Zhlobitsky's actions – destructive, violent actions (detonation that posed a threat to people), that happened on October 31, 2018 ... [as well as] violent actions made against members of FSS by E.Manyurov on 19 December, 2019".

In the second message that appeared in the case, Kriger wrote about his hatred of the regime, "chekists" [a catch-all term for secret police, referring to the Soviet "Cheka" service] and president Putin personally, and of his desire to live to see the "hanging of this secret police bastard" and take part in "this joyous event".

The prosecution classified both publication under the article of justification of terrorism (article 205.2 p.2, Criminal Code) and the first publication as well by the article of incitement to hatred (article 282, p.2, point "a", Criminal Code). The prosecution demanded nine years of jail and another four years of prohibition of website administration. In the sentence the article 282 was substituted by article 280, p.2, public call for extremism in the Internet.

The court sentenced Kriger to seven years of prison and four years of prohibition of website administration.

Kriger is represented by Michail Biryukov, our affiliate lawyer. He told OVD-Info that the sentences combined could have led the prosecutor to ask for an even more years of jail time. Why the court has changed the article is unclear for now as the defence has only just received the operative part of the protocol.

In his final words Mikhail Kriger said that he is not remorseful for his actions and if he suddenly changes his views, then this is because of the pressure put on his family. Kriger said that he was "afraid to lose to Gorinov", the Moscow municipal

deputy who got sentenced to six years and eleven months of detention for anti-war statements.

“In hope of somehow washing away the fratricidal shame that our country has brought upon itself, I was helping the Ukrainian refugees and stating on my social media my sincere hope to see Peremoga [Ukrainian for “victory”]. I was and still am assured that if the citizens of Russia are bound to see freedom then it can only come as an outcome of the Peremoga itself. In the same exact way as it came to Japan and Germany as an outcome of losing in war” said Kriger in his speech.

Alexander Litoy

ЧТО Я МОГУ С ЭТИМ СДЕЛАТЬ?

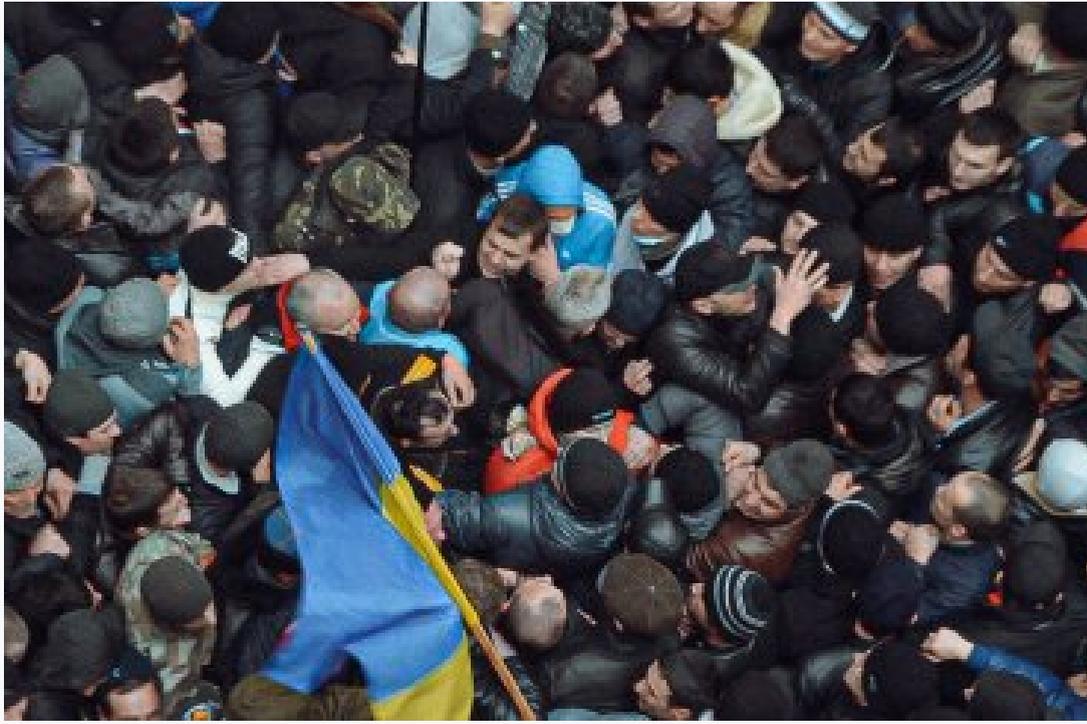
Прочитать, рассказать, поддержать. Подпишитесь на регулярные пожертвования ОВД-Инфо, чтобы как можно больше людей узнали о политических репрессиях в России сегодня.

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