

Russian activist charged with extremism

by UPI

MOSCOW -- Lev Ponomaryov, a prominent Russian human rights activist, said prosecutors charged him with extremism for accusing a prison official of torture. Ponomaryov told the Russian Regnum news agency in 2006 that the Federal Prison Service chief, Yury Kalinin, was "the author of a sadistic system of torture." The country's Kremlin-nominated human rights commissioner, Vladimir Lukin, also described prison conditions in many Russian facilities as "close to torture" in a recent interview. Ponomaryov said prosecutors falsely charged him with accusing Kalinin of a serious crime, The Moscow Times said Tuesday. Slander carries a maximum three-year prison term. Outgoing Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law in 2006 designating the slander of public officials as a form of extremism. Ponomaryov served in the State Duma and is the director of the For Human Rights group.

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