



Foreigners who fought for Ukraine plead guilty

Description

DONETSK: Two Britons and a Moroccan are on trial as mercenaries in a Donetsk court

Three foreigners who fought for Ukrainian forces pleaded guilty to a number of charges in a Donetsk court on Wednesday. British nationals Shaun Pinner and Aiden Aslin, and Moroccan citizen Ibrahim Saadoun, face a series of charges – some of which carry the possibility of the death penalty – after being captured by Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) forces in and around the city of Mariupol.



British citizens Aiden Aslin and Shaun Pinner, and Moroccan citizen Saadun Ibrahim attend a court hearing in Donetsk, Donetsk People's Republic.
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The DPR, recognised by Russia in February, claims sovereignty over the former Ukrainian province of Donetsk. Kiev still regards the land as part of its territory.

Aslin, Pinner, and Saadoun issued guilty pleas under Article 232 of the DPR Code, for “*undergoing training for the purpose of carrying out terrorist activities.*” Pinner also admitted to the Article 323 charge, “*act of seizing power by force.*”

All three said they were not guilty of being mercenaries in an armed conflict (Article 430) or participating in a conspiracy (Article 34). Proceedings against them at the Supreme Court of the

Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) began on Monday.

The DPR accuses Ukraine of military aggression against the breakaway state, which first declared independence in 2014 following the US-backed coup in Kiev. Both Britons said they had fought on the Ukrainian side since 2018.

Under the laws of the DPR, forcible seizure of power carries a penalty of 12-20 years behind bars, but could be escalated to capital punishment due to wartime aggravating circumstances. Being a mercenary is punishable by a prison sentence of three to seven years.

Pinner and Aslin were captured in Mariupol in April, as Russian and DPR troops cut off a brigade of Ukrainian marines to which they were attached. Neo-Nazi 'Azov' militants held out at an industrial complex of the Black Sea port city for another month before surrendering on May 20.

The British government has demanded that Aslin and Pinner be treated as prisoners of war under the Geneva Conventions. However, the DPR has pointed out that the conventions only apply to uniformed soldiers of a national military, not foreign mercenaries.

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