

Russian-Israeli historian Artem Kirpichenok detained by Israeli secret service

Clara Weiss
1 September 2026

On August 2, upon arrival at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion International Airport in Israel, Russian-Israeli historian and journalist Artem Kirpichenok, known as an outspoken critic of Zionism, was abducted by the Israeli secret service Shin Bet. According to his lawyer, the charges will be revealed on September 4. A request to transfer him to house arrest was denied.

Based on accounts of friends, Kirpichenok only traveled to Israel because he had been invited to a conference. However, after his abduction, his friends could not verify that this conference even existed. Moreover, they charge that he was denied access to a defense lawyer for 10 days, including during two hearings on the imposition of pre-trial measures. They launched a petition calling for his release.

The Russian Embassy issued a notice to the Israeli government upon his arrest and has since also brought his case before the UN Commissioner for Human Rights. According to the former State Duma Deputy and Stalinist, Daria Mitina, Kirpichenok is faced with "life in prison." His lawyers indicate that he does receive medical care but that he is extremely exhausted.

The *World Socialist Web Site* unequivocally condemns the abduction of Kirpichenok and calls on its readers to demand his immediate release. Kirpichenok's arrest is an attack on the democratic rights of the entire working class and speaks to the utter lawlessness and criminality with which the Israeli state suppresses its critics, regardless of their faith and nationality.

Kirpichenok is the author of books such as *A People's History of Israel* (2019), a collection of popular written articles, which was printed in a small run of 1,000 copies in Russian. In his preface, Kirpichenok emphasized that the victims of the Zionist project include "not only the Palestinians, but also

many Jews who, while they have not become cannon fodder, are subject to discrimination [within Israel] such as 'Mizrahim', 'the Ethiopians' and 'the Russians'." Articles in the book highlight the role of the imperialist powers in establishing the state of Israel and the violent suppression of the early Palestinian communist movement by both Britain and the Zionists.

In recent years, Kirpichenok has published academic articles on a variety of subjects, including the Israeli support for Kurdish groups during the Syrian Civil War. He also worked as a tour guide in St. Petersburg and wrote a Russian column for the Turkish state-funded media outlet TRT. He was often invited on Russian TV and smaller podcast shows as an expert on the history of the Jews and the politics of the Middle East. He traveled to Iran twice, but it is not clear whether these trips may have a relation to his arrest.

Kirpichenok was born in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), but his parents moved to Israel when he was young and he grew up in Jerusalem. He completed his mandatory military service with the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) and obtained a PhD from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem before eventually moving back to Russia in 2005. According to media reports, he used to be a member of the Communist Party of Israel ("Maki"). In Russia, he was active in the Committee for a Marxist International and later the Stalinist Revolutionary Workers' Party. According to his friend, the writer and artist Nika Dubrovsky, Kirpichenok had recently not been affiliated with any political organization.

Discussing the implications of his arrest on counterpunch.org, Dubrovsky wrote,

To arrest Artem is to make private individuals

afraid and to make them internalize their penguin-like condition, to shut up, and sit quietly in the corner. Arresting a bespectacled writer with a narrow audience is both easy and makes for a perfectly instructive example. Before Artem was arrested, it seemed to many of us—me included—that there were “anomaly zones” out there: in those anomaly zones, one could be somewhat safe from arbitrary arrest. It was felt that as long as you did not cross certain well understood lines, you could write, read, and speak about pretty much anything. Don’t join a party, don’t donate to certain organizations, don’t say certain things. But the lines that seemed to exist have now been erased and what you whisper in your kitchen can now get you into a prison cell.

On her Twitter/X page, Dubrovsky also posted a statement from Kirpichenok’s lawyer, describing how Kirpichenok was transported to the latest court hearing.

They led him bent almost double, with shackles on his wrists and ankles and a heavy weight attached to the chains. Looking at Artem, I kept remembering Dostoyevsky’s novels and everything nineteenth-century Russian literature wrote about prisoners sent to penal colonies. I was deeply upset, and I will not hide that from you. In ten years of legal practice and working in the courts, I have never seen anyone escorted like this. Even people accused of murder are not treated this way. This is unprecedented. I have never seen anything like it.

The Israeli internal security service Shin Bet is a central component of the Israeli state’s violent suppression of the Palestinian population and any form of opposition to it. It is notorious for its brutal methods of interrogation. It routinely uses physical and psychological coercion, including by cuffing detainees to low chairs in contorted postures and forcing them to

stay in this position for protracted periods of time; sleep deprivation and isolation; beatings and threats. B’Tselem, an Israeli NGO, documented the extraordinary abuse of Palestinians in the hands of Shin Bet in two reports from 2024 and 2026, entitled, “Welcome to Hell” and “Living Hell,” respectively. On its website, B’Tselem describes the Israeli prison system as a “network of torture camps,” detailing the systematic torture and rape of Palestinian detainees.

The agency is also systematically spying on the population to detect and suppress dissent. A Haaretz investigation recently revealed that a former Shin Bet operative heads an Education Ministry committee that monitors left-wing and Arab educators for their political speech, protests and social media posts. At least one educator, Meir Baruchin, was fired from his jobs for criticizing the genocide, and later held in a high security prison. According to a January 2024 article in the *Guardian*, hundreds of Israeli citizens of different professions and origin were arrested and jailed, fired from their jobs or denied access to education in the first months since October 7, 2023, because of social media posts.

The arrest of Kirpichenok marks a new escalation in the violent assault on anti-Zionist and anti-war opposition within Israel and more broadly. It is part of an intensifying attack on democratic rights, aimed at suppressing any opposition to war and far-right nationalism by governments internationally. In Ukraine, the Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotiuk was sentenced to a 15-year prison sentence for articles opposing the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine and the glorification of Ukrainian neo-Nazis. This attack on democratic rights and free speech is an integral component of the developing world war, which makes any and all open opposition to the policies of war, fascism and nationalism, dangerous. The demand for Kirpichenok’s release must, therefore be taken up by workers internationally as part of the fight to release political prisoners everywhere and stop the emerging third world war.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact