

Water Stunt May Earn 2 Years in Jail

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An opposition activist faces two years in jail for splashing water in the face of a prosecutor who jailed his comrades and allegedly threatened to kill him, the Agora rights group said Monday.

Dmitry Putenikhin, a member of The Other Russia, attacked Alexei Smirnov outside Moscow's Tverskoi District Court on Friday shortly after it jailed five people, including three fellow activists, for participating in Manezh Square rioting last December.

The verdict has raised eyebrows because the riots were racially charged, while The Other Russia is not a nationalist group. Critics say the authorities chose the organization as a scapegoat.

Putenikhin, also known under the alias Matvei Krylov, did not flee after the attack, explaining to journalists that his actions were "improvised." A [video](#) released by RIA-Novosti showed police brutally detaining him and three other people minutes after the attack.

Putenikhin, who remains in detention, was initially charged with petty hooliganism, but over the weekend, police reclassified the charge to threatening an official on duty.

Police acted on a complaint by Smirnov, who said Putenikhin shouted "death to prosecutors" when splashing the water on him, Interfax reported, citing an Other Russia spokesman.

Putenikhin's lawyer, Svetlana Sidorkina, said her client never threatened Smirnov, only telling him "we won't forget, we won't forgive," which does not qualify as a death threat, Agora said in a statement.

The video of the incident shed no light on the matter because it included neither statement. No date for a court hearing had been set Monday.

Nationalists rallied on Manezh Square in December to protest an allegedly botched probe into the death of a football fan, killed in a brawl with Dagestani natives, six of whom were jailed last week.

The twin rulings in the Dagestani and Other Russia trials were widely seen as a means to placate nationalists ahead of their Russian March rally on Nov. 4. City authorities have sanctioned the event to take place in the suburb of Lyublino, but a co-organizer told Interfax on Monday that the maximum number of participants has now been ordered slashed from 10,000 to 3,000.

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