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Prokhorov Speaks Up For Kozlov

By The Moscow Times

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Businessman Mikhail Prokhorov, who gained the second-largest number of votes in Moscow during the presidential election, on Friday assailed the recent guilty verdict in a high-profile business dispute as stoking distrust in the judicial system.

He reacted to the outcome of Alexei Kozlov's trial that ended with a court handing down a five-year prison sentence to the defendant the day before. Kozlov described the case as a fabrication.

Prokhorov, who is creating a pro-business political party, said the trial was yet another testimony that the rule of law is not taking root despite the government's stated efforts to make that happen.

"The declarations differ from reality," Prokhorov wrote in his LiveJournal blog. "And we have seen a great deal of these examples lately."

"This breeds a strong rejection by the public of the police and courts as a system, distrust

of these institutions and denial of their legitimacy."

As a result, people again take to the streets to demand freedom for political prisoners. And they will do so. And they will consider more and more people as political prisoners, even if these people do not outright fall under that category."

Prokhorov said he was ready to aid the efforts to gain an acquittal.

Kozlov's wife Olga Romanova, an opposition activist, and his lawyer said they would appeal the court ruling.

Opposition leader Boris Nemtsov said Friday that the guilty verdict was an act of intimidation to Romanova for her prominent role in the recent street protests.

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