

United Russia to Sue Navalny en Masse

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Opposition figure Alexei Navalny could be in for a huge bill if the project comes to fruition. **Denis Grishkin**

United Russia is gearing up to make opposition leader Alexei Navalny pay for his "party of crooks and thieves" moniker, which has haunted its members since the blogger coined the phrase.

The ruling party plans to create a website where members can register their dissatisfaction with Navalny's disparaging remarks. The ultimate goal is to sue the corruption campaigner to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars, Izvestia reported Saturday.

"I want to help not just one or two colleagues, but all those who are interested. For this reason, I decided that we must create an online platform, where all the necessary documents can be openly accessed," United Russia Deputy Vladimir Burmatov, who conceived of the project, told the state-controlled publication.

The site, which is set to go online June 13, could result in a huge bill for anti-corruption campaigner Navalny. If all United Russia members — of which there are roughly 2 million — join the mass lawsuit, the claims could stretch to 60 billion rubles (\$1.8 billion).

This would not be the first time that Navalny has landed in hot water over comments aimed at United Russia members.

Moscow's Lyublinsky District Court on June 5 ordered the opposition icon to pay 30,000 rubles to a deputy from the Kremlin-backed party for comments published in a December edition of Esquire magazine. That time the claims centered on the use of the phrase "crooks and thieves," too.

Navalny's lawyer Vadim Kobzev said at the time that his client would appeal the ruling, as it could set a precedent for similar cases, a judgment that is now proving prescient.

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