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Dozens Rally for Jailed Opposition Activists

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Thursday's protest called for the release of detained activists including Leonid Razvozzhayev, a Left Front activist facing a lengthy jail term for supposedly inciting mass riots.

Dozens of protesters gathered outside the Investigative Committee headquarters on Thursday and demanded that opposition activists Leonid Razvozzhayev and Konstantin Lebedev be released from jail.

A criminal case against the two senior Left Front members was opened last month following allegations in a state television program that they plotted riots with a Georgian power broker.

At Thursday's "Occupy" rally, protesters also called for the release of several people detained on allegations of inciting violence at a May 6 opposition rally on Bolotnaya Ploshchad, saying the government crackdown on the opposition had gone too far.

The day before the rally, the Investigative Committee officially refused to allow members of

President Vladimir Putin's human rights council to visit Razvozzhayev in jail.

"While the investigation is under way, additional meetings are unnecessary," the council's head, Mikhail Fedotov, told the Izvestia newspaper Wednesday, relaying the Investigative Committee's statement.

Council member Valery Borshchyov added by phone Thursday that the Investigative Committee had begun checks into Razvozzhayev's alleged abduction following a request by the Public Monitoring Commission.

Borshchyov emphasized that Razvozzhayev's case was similar to that of Sergei Magnitsky, a lawyer who died in pretrial detention after accusing state officials of embezzlement.

"Conditions in the detention center where Razvozzhayev is being held are fine, but the fact that he was intimidated and tortured make it possible to draw such an analogy," Borshchyov said.

While details about Razvozzhayev being taken into custody in Kiev remain hazy — he has claimed he was abducted by masked men and later tortured by Russian authorities — Ukraine said Wednesday that it would not open a criminal case into the incident.

Nikolai Kovalchuk, head of the Ukrainian Migration Service, told reporters that his nation had not received a political asylum request from Razvozzhayev, though he confirmed that Razvozzhayev had approached an Israeli refugee organization.

A representative of the United Nations Refugee Agency in Kiev, Alexandra Makovskaya, told RIA-Novosti that the Ukrainian Interior Ministry would not open such a case because Razvozzhayev legally crossed the border into Russia and did not make any claims at passport control.

Razvozzhayev's lawyer Mark Feigin said by phone Thursday that Russian investigators were going to bring additional charges against his client on Nov. 22, but because he signed a nondisclosure agreement he could not say what the charges would be.

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