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Kashin Fired From Kommersant

By Nikolaus von Twickel

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Kashin, left, marching with anti-corruption lawyer Alexei Navalny at an opposition event in September. **Igor Tabakov**

Kommersant has fired opposition-minded journalist Oleg Kashin for writing too much for other media and too little for his employer, the leading daily's editor said Monday.

"An agreement has been reached with Kashin [to terminate his employment] because he practically has not worked for Kommersant for one year," editor Mikhail Mikhailin told Interfax.

The news triggered a wave of media speculation Monday that the journalist has become the latest victim of an ongoing crackdown on the opposition. Kashin is a member of the opposition's Coordination Council, formed last month.

A source inside the Kommersant publishing house said Monday that Kashin's relations with his superiors had been deteriorating for months and that he reduced his contribution to a weekly column for the Kommersant FM radio station.

"This has been expected for some time," the source said, requesting anonymity because she was not authorized to speak on the record.

She added that while Kashin's opposition activities were seen as controversial inside the newsroom, it was wrong to interpret his dismissal as political.

"Some here viewed it as unacceptable — you're either a journalist or a politician," the source said, adding that the underlying conflict of interests applies to any political activity, be it oppositional or pro-government.

Reached by telephone on Monday, Kashin refused to comment. National media reported that he would join the OpenSpace.ru website, where he has been running a column since this summer. His name was already up Monday on the site's list of newsroom staff.

Oleg Kashin made headlines in 2010 when he was badly beaten in the courtyard of his house in Moscow. The incident is still unsolved, prompting his lawyer to announce earlier this month that Kashin would appeal to the European Court of Human Rights because the authorities' allegedly poor investigation violated his right to life.

A prolific writer, Kashin worked for Kommersant since 2003, with a four-year break after 2005, during which he worked for a range of media outlets, including the Kremlin-friendly Izvestia daily and Expert magazine. For two years he served as deputy editor of Russkaya Zhizn magazine before returning to Kommersant as special correspondent in 2009.

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