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Robbery Case Against Razvozzhayev Dropped

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A robbery charge against opposition activist Leonid Razvozzhayev based on an incident 15 years ago was dropped because the statute of limitations ran out, the activist's lawyer said Thursday.

The case was opened in November and became one of four criminal charges against Razvozzhayev, who was accused in October of plotting riots together with Left Front leader Sergei Udaltsov and another activist.

His case gained prominence after he disappeared from Kiev in October while seeking political asylum then appeared in Moscow days later in Russian police custody. He said he was kidnapped by masked assailants in the Ukrainian capital and tortured into making a confession to the riots charge, which he later recanted.

The Investigative Committee later opened another case against the activist, saying he robbed a fur trader in the Irkutsk region of 500 hats in December 1997. Investigators said the victim's

wife had told authorities about the incident and reminded them that "the perpetrators had not been brought to justice."

Razvozzhayev's lawyer, Dmitry Agranovsky, said that charge was dropped because the statute of limitations expired. However, investigators are not planning to send his client back to Moscow from the Irkutsk region city of Angarsk, where Razvozzhayev was transferred after the robbery case was opened, Agranovsky said.

"The Irkutsk detention center did not receive any statement from investigative authorities demanding to send him to Moscow," a prison representative in Irkutsk told RIA-Novosti.

Razvozzhayev's supporters say he was sent to Siberia so law enforcement officials could pressure him into confessing to the riots charge without the scrutiny of Moscow-based rights defenders.

Agranovsky also said Razvozzhayev would be moved to a prison hospital in response to his complaints of ill health. Agranovsky said that was a way for the authorities to keep the activist in Irkutsk.

"They are trying to hold him in Irkutsk by all means in order to manipulate him in a situation when they have no evidence of his guilt," he said.

Agranovsky said that his client had refused treatment in Irkutsk and that his lawyers were preparing a complaint to the Prosecutor General's Office.

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