

Navalny Announces Presidential Ambitions

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Navalny speaking at a 2012 rally in St. Petersburg.

Alexei Navalny, the opposition leader and anti-corruption blogger, said he would run for president and, if victorious, would use Russia's natural resources to significantly improve the population's standard of living.

"I want to become the president. I want to change the life of the country," Navalny said on Dozhd television late Thursday night.

He said his main task, if elected, would be to ensure that "the millions of people who live in this country, where oil and gas is flowing from the ground, do not live in such poverty and hopeless misery but live normally like people in European countries — and no worse than the Estonians."

The next presidential election will be held in 2018. Navalny, however, faces an uphill battle against his foe, President Vladimir Putin, who was elected to a third term last year and is thought to be weighing a bid for a fourth term.

Navalny also faces the prospect of not being able to run for office if convicted of embezzlement in a case that his supporters say is politically motivated. Navalny will go on trial in a Kirov court on April 17 on charges that he embezzled \$515,000 from a state timber company several years ago. If convicted, he could be handed a 10-year jail term, potentially leaving him behind bars until 2023.

Navalny said Thursday night that he expected to be convicted and to receive at least a suspended sentence.

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