

Prokhorov Defends Navalny Ahead of Trial

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Billionaire politician Mikhail Prokhorov has slammed the Investigative Committee's official spokesman Vladimir Markin for his scathing comments about opposition activist Alexei Navalny, who is set to go on trial this week in a case his supporters have called politically motivated.

Prokhorov, a metals magnate who heads the Civic Platform party, wrote on his LiveJournal blog on Sunday that Markin's interview to Izvestia would be enough to close the case against Navalny in any country with a properly working legal system.

In the interview, Markin said Navalny's attempts to "bring attention to himself" by taunting authorities had caused investigators to accelerate work on the inquiry against him.

"In any law-abiding state, this statement alone would be enough to dismiss the 'Navalny case' and open a case against General Markin himself," Prokhorov wrote.

Navalny is accused of organizing the theft of 16 million rubles (\$516,000) worth of timber from state-owned company KirovLes while serving as an unofficial aide to Kirov region Governor Nikita Belykh several years ago. He faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted.

In the blog post, Prokhorov said that without public consensus on the fairness of the legal system, people would begin to view courts as a "mechanism of repression."

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