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Bolotnaya Organizer Seeks Asylum in Sweden

By The Moscow Times

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Left Front activist Alexei Sakhnin has requested political asylum in Sweden, fearing arrest in connection to last year's May 7 demonstration at Bolotnaya Ploshchad.

The rally, held the day before President Vladimir Putin's inauguration, escalated into clashes between protesters and police. Hundreds of people were arrested and nearly 30 were charged with participation in mass riots and violence against police. Twelve are currently being tried.

Sergei Udaltsov, the leader of Left Front, was charged with organizing mass riots and was put under house arrest in February. Another member of the movement, Konstantin Lebedev, faced similar charges and was given 2 1/2 years in prison after he pleaded guilty in April.

Sakhnin was one of the organizers of the Bolotnaya Ploshchad rally and was detained before the clashes with police took place.

The activist told Kommersant he fled Russia in May of this year, after a person charged with participation in mass riots told him about his impending arrest.

Gazeta.ru reported investigators searched his apartment in June 2012 and have since interrogated him three times.

Sakhnin said he traveled to Belarus and several countries in southeastern Europe before going to Sweden. He added he had been already interviewed by the Scandinavian country's immigration service.

Following the Bolotnaya rally some 30 activists fled from Russia asked for political asylum abroad, Kommersant reported. In January, Other Russia activist Alexander Dolmatov killed himself in a Dutch detention center after the Netherlands refused his asylum request.

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