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Red Square Scrotum Protester Faces Five Years in Prison

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Pyotr Pavlensky could get up to five years in prison for his protest action on Red Square.

Police have brought hooliganism charges against artist Pyotr Pavlensky who nailed his scrotum to the cobbles on Red Square to protest Russia's descent into a "police state."

Pavlensky has been released on the condition that he doesn't leave Moscow, a police spokesman told RIA Novosti Friday. Hooliganism carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

He had earlier been charged with disorderly conduct, punishable by a fine of up to 1,000 rubles ($30) or a 15-day detention.

Pavlensky said that his ballsy protest, timed to coincide with a holiday honoring the police on Nov. 10, was "a metaphor for the apathy, political indifference, and fatalism of contemporary Russian society."

"It is not the bureaucrats' lawlessness that robs the society of an opportunity to act, but our

fixation on our defeats and losses is nailing us to the Kremlin's cobbles," Pavlensky said in a statement.

His intention was to protest Russia's slide into a "police state" and the authorities' attempt to "turn the country into one big prison camp," he said.

He drove a nail through his skin, trying to avoid hitting any veins, Pavlensky told Metro News. Then, he hammered the nail into the soft ground between Red Square cobbles, he said, Moi Raion reported.

Police covered Pavlensky with a blanket and had him taken to a hospital. Doctors disinfected and dressed his wound and gave him a tetanus shot, the performance artist said.

He said he had bought the nails at a hardware store, washed them with soapy water and wiped them with ethanol.

"I didn't see any particularly frightening health consequences," Pavlensky said.

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