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7 Bolotnaya Defendants Given Prison Terms, Navalny Detained Outside Court

By Matthew Bodner

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Supporters of the defendants dressed as prisoners outside the courtroom. **Igor Tabakov for MT**

(Updated Monday, Feb. 24, 4:50 p.m.)

A Moscow court on Monday handed down prison terms ranging from 2 1/2 to four years to seven people found guilty of participating in riots and clashing with police at an anti-Putin rally in 2012, while an eighth defendant was given a suspended sentence.

The Zamoskvoretsky court passed guilty verdicts against the defendants in the co-called Bolotnaya case on Friday, but the delivery of the sentences was delayed until after the weekend.

As was the case of Friday, hundreds of supporters of the defendants gathered outside the court and about 200 have been detained, the Moscow police department's press office said, Interfax reported.

Opposition leader Alexei Navalny and Pussy Riot members Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina were among those held by police on Monday.

“Guess where I am?” Navalny wrote on his Twitter account, “it begins with 'avto' and ends with 'zak',” referring to the russian word for “police van.”

Navalny then called for reinforcements.

“Everyone come to the Zamoskvoretsky court. You may be arrested, of course — it's a lottery: a one in 20 chance. But if you are arrested, it’s not terrible: it is warm and the company is good.”

The case relates to an authorized rally on Moscow's Bolotnaya Ploshchad that ended in skirmishes between demonstrators and police on May 6, 2012, the day before President Vladimir Putin took office for a third term.

The defendants were accused of a range of crimes, including throwing stones at police, hitting and shoving police, taking nonlethal weapons from police and stripping them of their helmets.

Human rights activists think the trial is part a Kremlin crackdown on the street protest movement that has been gaining momentum in Russia in recent years. They also argue that police intimidation sparked the unrest.

All of the suspects had pleaded not guilty.



Veteran human rights activist Lyudmila Alexeyeva outside the Zamoskvoretsky Court on Monday. (Igor Tabakov for MT)

Sergei Krivov got a four year term, the harshest sentence meted out to the defendants on

Monday.

The judge said that Krivov snatched a policeman's truncheon and hit him with it at the 2012 rally.

Krivov's lawyer, Vyacheslav Makarov, said that the sentence was “unreasonably cruel and illegal” and that they intend to appeal it.

“An innocent man was condemned to a real term,” Makarov said, Radio Liberty reported. “The judge relied only on the testimony of the victims, while numerous pieces of video evidence support my client's innocence. The judge did not use any of that.”

Andrei Barabanov got three years and seven months in prison, while Denis Lutskevich, Stepan Zimin and Alexei Polikhovich were handed 3 ½ year terms.

The court dished out a 2 ½ year sentence to Artyom Savyolov and gave Yaroslav Belousov two years and seven months.

Alexandra Naumova received a three year suspended sentence.

An unsanctioned demonstration against the verdict is planned for Monday evening on Manezh Square next to the Kremlin, although the police typically cordon off the square and step up security outside the nearby State Duma building ahead of planned unauthorized protests.



A protester wearing a Putin mask and holding a piece of paper carrying the message, "Life sentences for all." (Igor Tabakov for MT)

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