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Activist, Lawmaker, Pilot Feature on New List of Russian Political Prisoners

By Anna Dolgov

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A man walks into the office of human rights watchdog group "Memorial" in Moscow, in this Sept. 19, 2012 file photo.

Leading Russian human rights group Memorial has updated its list of political prisoners to include a federalization activist, a Moscow city legislator suspected of having contributed to a political opposition campaign, and a Ukrainian pilot.

The activist, Darya Polyudova, has been in jail since August on charges of extremism and appeals for separatism. The accusations stem from a rally for broader "federalization," or autonomy, rights for the southern Krasnodar region — the same "federalization" rights that Moscow has previously advocated for separatists in eastern Ukraine. The Krasnodar rally, according to a description that had been posted online by its organizers, did not call for separatism.

The Moscow lawmaker, Konstantinas Yankauskas, has been under house arrest since mid-

June on fraud charges in connection with an investigation into contributions to prominent opposition figure Alexei Navalny's 2013 mayoral campaign, according to material posted on the Memorial website. Navalny is also included on Memorial's list of 46 political prisoners. He has been under house arrest since February in connection with an ongoing fraud case. Along with his brother Oleg, Navalny is suspected of having defrauded a Russian branch of French cosmetics giant Yves Rocher.

Another recent addition to the list is Ukrainian pilot Nadezhda Savchenko, who is currently being held in Russia on suspicion of having aided in the killing of two Russian journalists in eastern Ukraine. The pilot maintains her innocence and says she was abducted and illegally taken into Russia, while Moscow claims she arrived voluntarily but offers no explanation of why Savchenko might have traveled across the border.

The list has shrunk down from the 71 names it contained last year, following a large-scale presidential amnesty to mark the anniversary of the Russian Constitution last December, Memorial said in an online statement.

The 35 prisoners released last year include 30 who were involved in an environmental protest aboard a Greenpeace ship, the Arctic Sunrise, Memorial said in a statement. They were covered by the amnesty.

Also included among the freed prisoners is former oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who was released by a presidential pardon in late December, after a decade in prison.

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