

Russian Opposition Activist Placed on Wanted List After Ditching Court Sentencing

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Sergei Mokhnatkin

Opposition activist Sergei Mokhnatkin has been placed on a wanted list after failing to appear at his sentencing hearing in an assault case against him, a news report said Wednesday.

Mokhnatkin was found guilty on Wednesday of attacking two police officers during a protest rally on Dec. 31, 2013, and he was sentenced to 4 1/2 years behind bars for the crime, Interfax reported.

In issuing the sentence, the judge said Mokhnatkin's aggressive behavior throughout his trial had attested to his guilt, the report said. In late September, he'd been committed to the Serbsky psychiatric institute after a court ordered him to undergo a psychiatric evaluation as part of the proceedings against him.

No results on the evaluation were ever disclosed, and Mokhnatkin was released from custody

in mid-October following an appeal by his lawyers to the European Court of Human Rights.

Mokhnatkin's indictment on Wednesday stems from an incident that occurred at a rally held monthly to defend the Constitution's Article 31, which provides for the right to free assembly.

Police said Mokhnatkin attacked two officers at the rally, though the activist himself claimed he'd been protecting a woman from police brutality.

Mokhnatkin had earlier served prison time for the same charges, however, after assaulting a police officer at a rally in 2009. After being sentenced to 2 1/2 years behind bars for that attack, he was released early, in April 2012, when then-President Dmitry Medvedev pardoned him.

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