

U.S. Censures Russian Court's Sentencing of Navalny Brothers

December 31, 2014



Russian opposition leader and anti-corruption blogger Alexei Navalny (front) and his brother and co-defendant Oleg attend a court hearing in Moscow, Dec. 30, 2014.

WASHINGTON — The U.S. State Department strongly condemned a suspended sentence handed to Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny and the jailing of his brother, Oleg, by a Russian court on Tuesday, calling it a "disturbing development."

The Navalny brothers were accused of stealing 30 million rubles, around \$500,000 at the current exchange rate, from two firms including an affiliate of the French cosmetics company Yves Rocher between 2008 and 2012.

Their case has been seen as part of a campaign by Moscow to stifle dissent.

"The decision is a disturbing development in our view," State Department spokeswoman Jeff Rathke told a briefing. "It appears to be designed to further punish and deter political activism."

Original url:

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