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European Parliament Condemns Case Against Navalny

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The European Parliament has passed a resolution saying the embezzlement case against anti-corruption campaigner Alexei Navalny and his brother Oleg was "based on unsubstantiated charges" and was likely politically motivated.

On Dec. 30, a Moscow court handed down a guilty verdict in the case, in which the pair was accused of stealing some 30 million rubles from two companies, including a French affiliate of Yves Rocher.

The court handed the opposition activist a 3 1/2-year suspended sentence, and sentenced Oleg to 3 1/2 years in a penal colony. Navalny blasted the ruling, criticizing the government for what he described to reporters as taking his brother to settle political scores with him.

The European Parliament voted unanimously on Thursday in support of a resolution urging Russian authorities to conduct proceedings against Navalny and his brother "free of political interference."

Parliament members expressed concern about the conviction handed down to Oleg in the case, saying it showed "the possible political use of a family member to intimidate and silence" the opposition leader.

The resolution also identified Navalny as "one of the most visible opponents of the government," expressing support for his anti-corruption work, and called Russia out for restrictions on free speech and free assembly, persecution of opposition activists and civic organizations, and the adoption of laws that go against European values.

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