The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Opens First Criminal Case for Repeated Protest Violations

January 18, 2015



Ionov last week was fined 20,000 rubles over a two-person demonstration in support of the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo.

A 79-year-old Russian man faces five years in prison after he on Friday became the first person to be charged with repeatedly breaking Moscow's law on unsanctioned protests, news agency RBC reported, citing the man's lawyer.

Russia's Constitution gives citizens the right to peacefully protest, but Moscow prohibits citizens from holding rallies attended by more than one person without prior permission.

The elderly activist, Vladimir Ionov of the pro-democracy group Solidarity, has been detained four times for participating in unsanctioned protests since September, including twice this month, the news report said. He also faces a fine of 1 million rubles ($15,500) due to the repeated violations.

Ionov last week was fined 20,000 rubles ($300) over a two-person demonstration in support of the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo, which had been targeted days earlier in a

deadly attack by Islamist gunmen. Ionov on Thursday was fined 150,000 rubles ($2,300) for participating in a rally for political opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

Prosecutors are also accusing Ionov of holding up signs with anti-government inscriptions near the Kremlin last September, according to a court document posted on Twitter by his lawyer, Sergei Panchenko, on Friday.

More than 15 activists were detained at the Navalny rally. Mark Galperin, a political activist who demonstrated alongside Ionov at the Charlie Hebdo and Navalny events, was reportedly remanded to custody under an administrative arrest for 38 days. Another pro-Navalny demonstrator, Ildar Dadin, received 15 days.

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