The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Dissident Allied With Navalny Wins Political Asylum in Britain

By The Moscow Times

April 01, 2015



Vladimir Ashurkov, a fundraiser for the Russian opposition and a close political ally of Alexei Navalny, has received political asylum in Britain.

A former executive at billionaire Mikhail Fridman's Alfa Group, Ashurkov quit business to join anti-corruption investigations into powerful Russian officials and raised funds for Navalny's 2013 campaign to become mayor of Moscow.

"I applied for political asylum in July and at the end of last week was informed that my application had been approved. The primary reason, which I indicated in the application, was the criminal case that was opened against myself and my colleagues Nikolai Lyaskin and Konstantin Yanauskas," Ashurkov said, the RBC news website reported late Tuesday night.

"I am more useful at liberty, even in London, than under arrest in Russia," Ashurkov said, news agency RBC reported.

Russian investigators have accused Ashurkov of fraud linked to his fundraising for Navalny and have sought his arrest.

Yanauskus, who also worked on Navalny's mayoral bid, has been accused under the same charges and is currently under house arrest.

Ashurkov's girlfriend, Alexandrina Markvo, is also living in London and was arrested in absentia by a Moscow court in February on fraud charges linked to her work for an advertising agency. Ashurkov said that she was seeking political asylum, RBC reported.

A number of Navalny's close associates were entangled in criminal investigations last year in what activists describe as a deliberate Kremlin push to quash Russia's opposition movement. Ashurkov also played a prominent role in attempts to register a political party as a vehicle for Navalny's activities.

Ashurkov joins a growing list of anti-Kremlin activists who have left Russia in recent years, fearing jail sentences as a result of politically motivated criminal cases.

In recent years, Britain has granted political asylum to such figures as Kremlin kingmaker Boris Berezovsky, banker Andrei Borodin and former Russian intelligence agent Alexander Litvinenko.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/04/01/russian-dissident-allied-with-navalny-wins-political-asylum-in-britain-a45358