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Navalny Brothers to Receive Award from European NGO

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Russian opposition leader and anti-corruption blogger Alexei Navalny (R) talks with his brother and co-defendant Oleg (inside defendants cage) during a court hearing in Moscow on Dec. 30, 2014.

A European human rights organization has awarded its prize for fighting "against totalitarianism" to Russian opposition activist Alexei Navalny and his imprisoned brother Oleg.

The Prize of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience 2015 will be officially conferred at a ceremony Wednesday in the Hungarian capital of Budapest, the organization said on its website.

The Platform of European Memory and Conscience is an umbrella NGO bringing together 48 public and private institutions from 18 countries to raise awareness of totalitarianism.

The prize is awarded annually to people who are "fighting today against totalitarianism, for the ideals of democracy, fundamental human rights and freedoms and the rule of law," the organization said.

“By the award of the Prize, the Platform wishes to express its respect and support to Mr. Oleg Navalny whom the Platform considers a political prisoner and to Mr. Alexei Navalny for his efforts to expose corruption, defend political pluralism and opposition to the mounting authoritarian regime in the Russian Federation,” the organization said.

A Russian court convicted the Navalny brothers last December of stealing nearly 30 million rubles — about $576,000 at the current exchange rate — from two firms, including an affiliate of the French cosmetics company Yves Rocher.

In what critics describe as a politically motivated case, the court handed down a suspended 3.5-year sentence to Alexei Navalny, but ordered his brother Oleg to serve a term of the same duration in prison.

Alexei Navalny's Party of Progress was expected to compete in Russia's regional elections this year, but the plan was derailed when the Justice Ministry canceled the political party's legal registration last week.

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