

Kremlin Critic Navalny Says Russia Denies Him Foreign Travel

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Russian opposition leader and anti-corruption blogger Alexei Navalny

Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny said Tuesday he was suing the immigration authorities for denying him a passport to travel abroad, describing the move as an echo of Soviet times.

Navalny, who led mass street protests against President Vladimir Putin in 2011-12, published a letter by the Federal Migration Service (FMS), saying he had been denied a foreign travel passport because he was serving a suspended prison term.

"I'm 'travel-banned' just like in Soviet times," he said on his Twitter feed. "I'm suing the FMS."

Navalny was given a five-year suspended sentence in 2013 on charges he organized large-scale theft of timber, a sentence he described as Putin's revenge for challenging the Kremlin. Under Russian law, people convicted of a crime can be barred from traveling abroad until they have served their sentence.

Russians may have two passports — an internal ID and an external pass for traveling abroad. In Soviet times, relatively few were allowed foreign travel passports, but artists, intellectuals and scientists who expressed dissident views could be deprived of travel documents they had enjoyed as a privilege.

Navalny said on his website, navalny.com, that he would not be able to attend court hearings in Germany related to Internet hacking, where he features as a co-defendant.

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