

Russia Ordered by Strasbourg Court to Pay Opposition Activist Damages

By [The Moscow Times](#)

January 06, 2016



The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg

The European Court of Human Rights has ordered Russia to pay damages to an opposition activist arrested at a 2012 Moscow protest that marked the high-point of demonstrations over the re-election of President Vladimir Putin.

In a ruling published on its website on Tuesday, the court ordered Russia to pay 25,000 euros in damages and 7,000 euros in legal costs to Yevgeniy Frumkin. He had been imprisoned for 15 days over a demonstration on Bolotnaya Square on the eve of Putin's inauguration that alleged electoral violations.

The Strasbourg court ruled that "the measures taken against [Frumkin] were grossly disproportionate to the aim pursued."

The case of the Bolotnaya protestors has become a cause celebre in Russia, where Putin's

critics see harsh punishments meted out to several protestors as symbolic of repressive treatment of dissent.

Putin, who keeps a tight rein on media, remains by far the most popular politician in Russia and appears likely to stand again for re-election in 2018. The 2012 protests, focused in Moscow and St. Petersburg, subsequently died down.

It was not clear whether Russia intends to pay the damages awarded to Frumkin or comply with another previous ruling over the protest. The Justice Ministry was not available for comment.

At the Bolotnaya protest, about 400 people were arrested and dozens hurt in clashes between protestors and police, which each side accused the other of provoking.

Obstructing Traffic

Several protestors subsequently received multi-year prison sentences for their alleged part in organizing the violence, including Sergei Udaltsov, a well-known opposition leader.

Frumkin's case is one of several lodged in Strasbourg in connection with the protest. Tuesday's ruling follows a previous one in September that ordered Russia to pay 7,000 euros in damages to three other protestors for human rights breaches.

In its latest ruling, the Strasbourg court said the authorities responsible had failed to communicate a change of policing plans to the protest's organizers.

"The authorities had not complied with even the minimum requirements in their duty to communicate with the assembly leaders, which had been an essential part of their obligation to ensure the peaceful conduct of the assembly," the ruling said.

Frumkin had been sent to prison for obstructing traffic and disobeying police orders to stop. His explanation — that he had simply not been quick enough to leave the venue in the general confusion — had not been contested or ruled out, the court said.

In a sign of Russia's irritation against frequent Strasbourg rulings against the country, Putin signed a law in December that empowered Russia's Constitutional Court to decide whether Strasbourg rulings should be implemented.

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