The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Navalny Ally Volkov Guilty of 'Preventing Journalist's Work'

August 31, 2016

Opposition activist Alexei Navalny (L) and Leonid Volkov **Vladimir Smirnov / TASS**

Opposition activist Leonid Volkov has been found guilty of preventing the work of a journalist by a court in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk.

Volkov was spared the two- year prison term requested by prosecuters, but received a fine of 30,000 rubles ($460).

The activist was initially arrested on July 17, 2015, on accusations that he had damaged a microphone belonging to a cameraman from the Life News TV channel. Volkov had been visiting the Novosibirsk office of the PARNAS political party alongside opposition activist Alexei Navalny when members of the far-right ⊠People's Liberation Front (NOD) staged an unsanctioned picket outside ⊠the building.

Some of the activists began to throw eggs at Navalny, and the Life News cameraman began to approach him. Volkov shielded Navalny by standing in the cameraman's way and holding on to the camera's microphone.

The Life News journalist is heard saying to Volkov, "Shall I break your arm?" He later claimed that Volkov had damaged the microphone.

The activist was found guilty of preventing the journalist's work, but was acquitted of physically harming the cameraman.

Writing on Facebook Wednesday morning, Volkov said that "in terms of the modern Russian political process, [his sentence was] tantamount to acquittal."

He also maintained that the case was politically motivated and promised to appeal the sentence, "in the European Court of Human Rights if necessary."

"The case is 100 percent winnable," Volkov wrote, adding that his team had worked "with a never give up attitude" for a year and that "it would be strange to give up now."

Writing in a statement on his website prior to the sentencing, Volkov said that the case had cost him over ($23,000), and had been a "hellish, nervous episode for me, my family and loved ones."

"That there are still political trials and political prisoners in our country, in the 21st century, is a complete, endless shame," he wrote.

He also said that he hoped the supporting material collected by his team could serve as a case study of political oppression. "Perhaps in the future you could give lectures to law students on "how political cases were fabricated in the late Putin period," he said.

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