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Navalny Fined $5,000 Over Canvassing Violations

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Alexei Navalny **Moscow-live.ru / Flickr**

A Moscow court has fined opposition leader Alexei Navalny 300,000 rubles ($5,000) for encouraging his supporters to take to the streets and distribute political fliers in central Moscow on July 8-9, the Interfax news agency reported on Thursday.

Two of Navalny's colleagues, Leonid Volkov and Nikolai Lyashkin, were also handed fines.

The Simonovsky court in Moscow ruled that the three men had violated canvassing laws by encouraging supporters to take to the streets and hand out the fliers without the necessary permission from city authorities.

Navalny told reporters outside the courthouse on Thursday that the ruling was politically motivated and he plans to appeal the court's decision.

"We understand why this is happening," the opposition leader said. "The government is freaking out and is nervous that we have a genuine presidential campaign and it doesn't know

how to stop us."

"[The authorities] are trying to fight us in the usual way, arresting people, intimidating people... and now they are trying to scare us with huge fines."

Since 2011, Navalny has been the subject of several investigations and criminal cases. In July, a Moscow district court ordered Navalny and two co-defendants to pay 2.16 million rubles ($35,500) in damages to a timber company over charges of fraud.

A court in Russia's Kirov region found Navalny guilty of embezzling funds from the timber firm in 2013 in a case the opposition leader claims was politically motivated. The sentence was later dropped on appeal.

When Navalny was reconvicted in February, he said the ruling was an attempt to sabotage his presidential ambitions ahead of elections scheduled for March 2018.

In June, he served a 25-day jail term for violating protest laws after tens of thousands took to the streets in anti-corruption protests organized by the opposition leader.

Russian law bars anyone with a criminal record from running, but Navalny has repeatedly said he remains undaunted.

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