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30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Security Forces Kidnap Kremlin Critic, Force Him Into Army – Reports

December 24, 2019

Ruslan Shaveddinov **rshaveddinov / Instagram**

A Kremlin critic and prominent aide of opposition leader Alexei Navalny has reportedly been forcibly conscripted into the military in northern Russia almost 24 hours after he went missing.

Ruslan Shaveddinov's supporters raised the alarm Monday evening when he stopped answering phone calls and colleagues posted pictures of his apartment's door — which appeared to have been smashed open in a raid. Following initial confusion about his whereabouts, Navalny's lawyers reportedly located Shaveddinov at a conscription center in Moscow before he was taken to an unknown location.

"Military service has turned into a tool of imprisonment," Navalny tweeted alongside a video of at least half a dozen men in uniforms accompanying Shaveddinov into a van.

Embed:

> Служба в армии превратилась просто в тюремный механизм. Разновидность лишения свободы. В квартире Руслана @shaveddinov сломали дверь, похитили его, моментально посадили на самолёт (!!), увезли куда-то в Архангельск и там возят под конвоем с огромным количеством полиции pic.twitter.com/w2K9GZOjD6
>
> — Alexey Navalny (@navalny) 24 декабря 2019 г.

A popular blogger who posted the video claimed it depicted "Shaveddinov's VIP escort into the army." The Moscow Times was unable to independently verify its authenticity.

Navalny called Shaveddinov's alleged recruitment a kidnapping.

"They broke down Ruslan's apartment door, abducted him, immediately put him on a plane, took him somewhere in Arkhangelsk and are driving him around with a huge police escort," Navalny said.

He added that the conscription was illegal because Shaveddinov had filed a court appeal against the conscription that had not yet been considered.

Military service lawyer Arkady Chaplygin confirmed that Shaveddinov had legally contested his conscription on Dec. 17.

"If they try to send [Shaveddinov] into military service, criminal action can be taken against the draft board," Chaplygin tweeted.

Vyacheslav Gimadi, a lawyer with Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, said that the group would file a report about a missing person.

Navalny and his allies have faced threats, arrests and attacks in recent years that escalated after they helped organize mass anti-government rallies in Moscow this summer.

Authorities froze the bank accounts of Navalny's foundation and branded it a "foreign agent," while courts ordered him and his allies to pay millions of dollars in damages after the protests.

Authorities had detained Shaveddinov — who has worked for Navalny as a YouTube channel host and project manager — at least three times this fall.

Update: Navalny tweeted that Shaveddinov was taken to serve in Russia's remote Novaya Zemlya archipelago in the Arctic Ocean.

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