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Russian Activist Convicted Under 'Repeat Protest' Law Walks Free From Prison

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Konstantin Kotov was the second person ever to be prosecuted under a law criminalizing "repeated" participation in unsanctioned rallies. **Andrei Vasilyev / TASS**

Russian activist Konstantin Kotov was released from prison Wednesday after serving 18 months for "multiple breaches" of Russia's protest law.

Kotov, who was arrested during the summer 2019 Moscow election protests, was the second person ever to be prosecuted under the controversial law criminalizing "repeated" participation in unauthorized rallies. A Moscow court cut the 35-year-old computer programmer's four-year jail sentence to 18 months this spring.

Related article: Moscow Court Cuts Jail Term for Activist Kotov

The OVD-Info police-monitoring website reported that Kotov walked free from a penal colony

100 kilometers east of Moscow in the dark early hours of Wednesday.

Footage shared by activists showed Kotov being met by his wife Anna Pavlikova, who herself had received a suspended sentence in a separate high-profile extremism case.

In late November, he was denied parole to be released on Dec. 7 because prison officials said he "had not yet reformed," OVD-Info said. It previously reported that prison administrators had subjected Kotov to reprimands and placed him in solitary confinement for minor infractions.

Kotov told MBKh Media he plans to continue his activism "as soon as he understands what's happening in the country and comes to his senses."

His defense team had demanded that his sentence be annulled and that he be immediately released.

President Vladimir Putin said last December that he would look at Kotov's case and instructed federal prosecutors a month later to review his prison sentence.

Amnesty International had declared Kotov a prisoner of conscience.

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