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Russia Seeks to Jail Navalny

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Pavel Golovkin / AP / TASS

Russia's prison authority has asked to replace Alexei Navalny's suspended sentence in the Yves Rocher case with a real prison term, the Kremlin critic said Tuesday, a signal that he could be imprisoned if he returns to Russia following his poisoning.

Navalny, 44, is currently in rehabilitation in Germany following what European scientists called poisoning by the Novichok nerve agent and has vowed to return to Russia after making a full recovery.

Related article: Russia Opens 'Fraud' Probe Against Navalny

The Federal Prison Service (FSIN) late last month threatened to imprison Navalny if he did not return by Dec. 29. His extended probation period in the embezzlement case he says was politically motivated and Europe's human rights court ruled was unfair expired on Dec. 30.

"Putin is so furious that I survived his poisoning that he ordered the FSIN to go to court and demand that my suspended sentence be changed to a real one," Navalny tweeted Tuesday.

He attached a court database screenshot stating that a case had been registered Monday to "cancel a suspended sentence in connection with failure to discharge duties, evasion of compensation of damage and commission of a new crime."

The FSIN said on Dec. 28 that it had learned from medical journal The Lancet that Navalny had been discharged from a German clinic in the fall after recovering from the near-fatal Novichok poisoning.

Also late in December, Russian investigators opened a criminal probe on allegations that he had misused $4.8 million of donations to his nonprofits. The charge carries a penalty of up to 10 years in prison.

The FSIN's previous attempts to overturn Navalny's suspended sentence in the Yves Rocher case and jail him were rejected by a Moscow court in 2017.

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