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Navalny Allies Announce Second Nationwide Protest Sunday

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Valery Sharifulin / TASS

Nationwide protests in support of Alexei Navalny will continue next Sunday, the jailed opposition leader's top aide Leonid Volkov said Monday.

"On Jan. 31 at 12:00 p.m. All Russian cities. For Navalny's freedom. For freedom for all. For justice. More details to come," Volkov tweeted.

Related article: Protests for Jailed Kremlin Critic Navalny Sweep Russia

Protests swept across more than 100 Russian cities on Saturday, with tens of thousands calling for Navalny's release as well as rallying against Russia's ruling elite. The protests stretched far beyond Russia's urban centers of Moscow and St. Petersburg with Russians braving freezing temperatures in Yakutia, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk and other cities. More than 3,700 people were detained across the country, with dozens of protesters injured.

“Why should we come out again? Because the reason (behind the protests) has not disappeared anywhere. And the experience of Jan. 23 showed that free people are much stronger than fear (Putin's only weapon),” Volkov said in a follow-up tweet.

The second round of protests will take place ahead of Navalny’s Feb. 2 hearing where he faces up to 3.5 years in prison.

“Closer to the court date, our demand will sound more powerful. And in Moscow, of course, you have to come to the court on Feb. 2,” Volkov said.

Volkov said that protest routes will be announced in cities where Navalny’s team has headquarters. In other cities, Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation will help local protesters coordinate routes, Volkov said, choosing the longest routes that end at the cities' main square.

Navalny was jailed upon his Jan. 17 return to Russia from Germany where he spent five months recovering from what European experts identified as poisoning with the Novichok nerve agent.

Ahead of his return, the federal prison service had asked the court to replace his suspended sentence in a 2017 embezzlement verdict with a real prison term, saying he violated the terms of his probation while recovering in Germany. Navalny has said the embezzlement case against him was politically motivated and Europe’s top human rights court said he was unfairly convicted.

Navalny called for nationwide protests shortly after being detained. While in jail, Navalny's team released a sweeping investigation into President Vladimir Putin’s alleged $1.3 billion palace on the Black Sea, which helped fuel protest sentiment.

Since its release last week, over 86 million people have watched the investigation on YouTube. Putin has since denied the allegations contained in the video.

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