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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

St. Petersburg Woman Kicked by Police at Navalny Protests Pursues Charges

January 26, 2021



Margarita Yudina was hospitalized following the incident. **Baza / Telegram**

A St. Petersburg woman who was kicked in the stomach by police during protests demanding opposition leader Alexei Navalny's release from jail will press charges against the officer, she told the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper.

A viral video from Saturday's nationwide rallies showed Margarita Yudina, 54, collapsing on the pavement after being kicked by a riot police officer escorting a protester. A subsequent video showed an officer visiting Yudina in hospital with flowers, asking for forgiveness and her responding "It's OK, godspeed."

Embed:

> В Петербурге на Площади восстания ОМОНовец очень сильно ударил женщину ногой после того, как она задала вопрос о

задержанииhttps://t.co/50drP9qjlr

Видео: @Fontanka_spb pic.twitter.com/DSPuJDcSDH

— Медиазона (@mediazzzona) January 23, 2021

Yudina clarified to Novaya Gazeta that the visiting officer was a superior apologizing on behalf of his subordinate and expressed disapproval with the authorities for failing to take her testimony.

“It’s not about forgiveness. This case needs legal recourse instead of melodrama, so I intend to turn to the Investigative Committee and find out who attacked me,” Yudina said.

“If riot police can’t forgive thrown plastic cups,” Yudina said, referring to criminal charges levied against Moscow protesters in summer 2019, “do we have to forgive blows to our heads?”

The Russian rights group Team 29 announced that it plans to represent Yudina in court.

Pro-Kremlin pundit and talk show host Vladimir Solovyov sought to play down the incident, calling the officer’s kick that knocked down Yudina a “nudge.” His frequent guest and former head of Russia’s coronavirus information center Alexander Myasnikov defended the officer, writing on social media that the kick was a “reflex developed through years of training.”

Yudina is among the estimated 24 St. Petersburg residents who sought medical attention after the Navalny rallies.

A record-setting 3,770 people were detained across 120 cities when tens of thousands took to the streets in support of Navalny, who was jailed pending trial under an old fraud case upon his return from Germany where he had been recovering from nerve agent poisoning. His allies, most of whom had been jailed or fined on the eve of Saturday’s rallies, have announced fresh protests for next weekend.

Western leaders have condemned what they called a violent crackdown on protesters while the Kremlin accused the United States of interference for posting a safety advisory for its citizens.

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