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Moscow Police Warn Against Second Pro-Navalny Protest

Unauthorized demonstrations will be “immediately suppressed,” authorities warned.

By AFP

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Almost 4,000 protesters were detained during protests on Jan. 23, according to a count by independent monitors. **Gavriil Grigorov / TASS**

Moscow police Thursday warned Russians supporting jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny against staging protests this weekend, saying demonstrators could face criminal responsibility.

Tens of thousands of people across Russia rallied last weekend in support of the 44-year-old opposition leader, who urged supporters to protest against President Vladimir Putin's 20-year rule.

The opposition plans to hold more rallies on Sunday, which in Moscow will take place outside

the headquarters of the FSB, the security agency that Navalny says targeted him in a poisoning attack on Putin's orders. The Kremlin has dismissed the claims.

Moscow police said in a statement on Thursday that organizers and participants of opposition protests could become targets of criminal probes.

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"Attempts to hold unsanctioned public events as well as any provocative actions on the part of their participants will be considered a threat to public order and immediately suppressed," the statement said.

Police for the Moscow region issued a similar warning, urging parents to make sure their children stay away from unsanctioned demonstrations.

"Even attending an unsanctioned demonstration or march can be considered a violation of the legislation," police said.

More than 4,000 people were detained last Saturday at the nationwide rallies, which have sparked a series of criminal investigations.

Several of Navalny's allies were detained following police raids on their apartments and offices.

Police arrested Navalny at a Moscow airport after he returned to Russia on January 17 from Germany, where he had been recovering from a near-fatal poisoning with a nerve toxin.

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