

Navalny's Team Announces No More Protests Until Spring

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Tens of thousands have taken to the streets to support Alexei Navalny since he returned to Russia in January. **Grigoriy Pokras for VTimes**

Alexei Navalny's supporters will stop staging protests demanding his release until at least this spring, a key aide of the imprisoned Kremlin critic said Thursday.

Leonid Volkov, head of Navalny's regional network of campaign-style offices, announced he would not be calling supporters to take to the streets for a third successive weekend of protests across Russia, citing the forceful police crackdowns and concerns more arrests would hamper the organization's plans to campaign ahead of parliamentary elections scheduled for September.

"If we go out every week, thousands more will be detained, and hundreds more beaten," Volkov said in a live broadcast on Navalny's YouTube channel.

"The work of the regional headquarters will be paralyzed and it will be impossible to work on elections. This is not what Alexei wants from us. Alexei has asked us to concentrate on this

autumn,” when State Duma [elections](#) will be held.

Related article: [Navalny Urges Supporters to Fight For Freedom in First Post After Sentencing](#)

The Kremlin critic championed a tactical voting system — dubbed “Smart Vote” — in regional elections over recent years which had [some success](#) in helping to defeat candidates from the ruling United Russia party. It proved controversial among Russia’s opposition, however, as it involved openly supporting Communists and other pro-Kremlin parties, dubbed the so-called “systemic opposition.”

Before his arrest and sentencing, Navalny was planning to put the system to use in State Duma elections later this year in an attempt to deal another blow to the Kremlin.

Volkov insisted that is still the plan, and that more protests in support of Navalny will be held later this year in the spring and summer. He stressed the temporary pause does not mean Navalny’s supporters are accepting his fate.

“We will get him out of prison using foreign policy methods,” the independent Dozhd online television station cited Volkov as saying — a reference to his earlier [statement](#) that Navalny’s supporters would work to ensure world leaders put pressure on President Vladimir Putin to release Navalny.

Unsanctioned protests have swept across Russia since Navalny was detained at a Moscow airport upon his return from Germany in January. Police have detained more than ten thousand and dished out hundreds of short-term jail stints and administrative fines. Dozens of Navalny’s key aides and regional organizers are currently behind bars, having been charged with organizing unsanctioned protests.

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