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Russia to Pay Damages for 2012 Navalny Arrest

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Jean-Francois Badias / AP / TASS

Russia has agreed to pay jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny damages for his 2012 detention during mass anti-government demonstrations that Europe's human rights court ruled degrading, Interfax reported Thursday.

Russia's Justice Ministry said it will not appeal the European Court of Human Rights' (ECHR) November ruling because the ruling did not hold that Navalny's rights had been violated.

"The Russian Justice Ministry had brought forward at the adversarial process the position that 'political motivations' were absent in the actions of the authorized state bodies in bringing [Navalny] to justice," Interfax quoted the ministry as saying.

The ECHR ordered Russia to compensate Navalny 8,500 euros ($10,300) for violating his freedom of assembly and right to a fair trial.

The fierce Kremlin critic was among the hundreds of those detained at the May 2012 rallies

against President Vladimir Putin's third inauguration, part of wider opposition protests of 2011-2013.

Russia's consent to pay the damages came ahead of Navalny's next scheduled Moscow court hearing Friday on charges of defaming a World War II veteran.

Earlier this month, Navalny was sentenced to nearly three years in prison after being found guilty of violating probation in a 2014 fraud conviction while he was recovering from a near-fatal poisoning in Germany that he blames on Putin.

Russian investigators also opened a criminal fraud probe against Navalny in December on allegations that he misused nearly $5 million of donations to his organizations. He could be imprisoned for another 10 years if found guilty.

Navalny and his allies say all three criminal cases are politically motivated.

His allies have called for supporters to stage a flashlight protest in their courtyards on Valentine's Day, a shift intended to avoid another police crackdown that followed street protests in recent weeks.

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