The Moscow Times
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2 Navalny Allies Missing Day After Opening Regional Office

April 13, 2021



Navalny's Dagestani regional coordinator Eduard Atayev **Screenshot Youtube**

Two allies of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny have gone missing the day after opening a campaign office in the southern Russian republic of Dagestan, the office's Twitter account said Monday.

Sunday's low-key opening in the Dagestani capital of Makhachkala follows an abandoned attempt in February, when the then-regional campaign manager was assaulted hours after Navalny's team first announced their plans.

"Yesterday we opened a headquarters in Makhachkala, and today our coordinator Eduard Atayev disappeared," Navalny's office said.

A regional election observer added that Atayev's assistant Murad Manapov has also gone missing after leaving his home.

Local police denied detaining the two men, Ruslan Ablyakimov, who fled Dagestan after he

was attacked after the announced opening in February, said on Monday evening.

Navalny's office in the Muslim-majority region is part of a wider expansion of its network of 37 offices ahead of key parliamentary elections this fall where his team hopes to block the pro-Kremlin party's supermajority.

"The capital of Dagestan is the largest Russian city where we have never had a headquarters," senior Navalny aide Leonid Volkov, who fled Russia in 2019 when authorities opened a criminal money-laundering probe against Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, wrote last month.

"There is strong disaffection [in Makhachkala] and I know the opening of our headquarters is eagerly awaited there."

Navalny is serving two and a half years on old fraud charges in a prison colony described as one of Russia's harshest.

He was jailed upon returning to Russia from Germany, where he spent months recovering from a near-fatal poisoning with what European experts and the global chemical weapons watchdog determined was the Novichok nerve agent.

Navalny, 44, announced he was starting a hunger strike on March 31 to demand proper medical treatment for severe back pain and leg numbness.

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