

# Explainer: Where Things Stand With Navalny

A look at the state of play in the impasse between President Vladimir Putin's most vocal domestic critic and the Kremlin.

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Navalny's health is failing. **Yelizaveta Vereykina / Twitter**

It is nearly three weeks since jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny went on hunger strike to demand his own doctors be allowed to visit him in prison.

Navalny's health has [deteriorated](#) rapidly since he went on hunger strike, his doctors say, and an international chorus of protest is growing amid rising tensions between Moscow and the West.

Navalny was jailed in January immediately after his return to Russia from Germany, where he had spent five months recovering from a near-fatal nerve agent poisoning he blames on the

Kremlin. He was sentenced to two and a half years for violating parole on 2014 fraud charges that he calls politically motivated.

While Navalny's allies have called for a fresh round of countrywide protests in support of the imprisoned leader on Wednesday, hours after a state-of-the-nation address by Putin, prosecutors have asked a Moscow court to label organizations linked to him as "extremist."

Here's an overview of what is happening with Navalny, his opposition movement and what Russian and Western governments are doing about it:

### How is Navalny's health?

- The Kremlin critic began to suffer from severe back pain and a loss of sensation in one of his legs after he was imprisoned. Navalny claimed the authorities failed to prescribe appropriate treatment for the condition and caused his health to deteriorate further by torturing him with sleep deprivation. On March 31, he [announced](#) a hunger strike "to demand that the law be obeyed and a doctor be allowed to visit."
- The numbness in Navalny's leg has since [spread](#) to his hands and he has also [developed](#) signs of respiratory infection, including a cough and high fever. Navalny's wife Yulia [said](#) last week that he weighed 76 kilograms (168 pounds) — down nine kilograms (20 pounds) since he began to refuse food.
- Navalny's personal doctor Anastasia Vasilyeva and three more physicians including cardiologist Yaroslav Ashikhmin [warned](#) on Saturday that Navalny "can die any minute" from arrhythmia. Ashikhmin pointed to the opposition politician's high potassium levels — way above the critical level of 6.0 millimoles (mmo) per liter of blood at 7.1 mmo — and said Navalny should be moved to intensive care

### What are Navalny's allies doing?

- On April 7, the Kremlin critic's supporters, including several doctors, [gathered](#) outside Navalny's penal colony in the town of Pokrov around 100 kilometers (60 miles) east of Moscow to demand access to Navalny, but were rebuffed. Four attendees at the improvised rally later [received](#) week-long sentences for their participation.
- Navalny's doctors made another attempt to visit him on Sunday but were again [denied](#) access.
- Navalny's team has called for nationwide protests in his support to be held on Wednesday evening, just hours after Russian President Vladimir Putin is set to deliver his state-of-the-nation address. Navalny aide Leonid Volkov has compared efforts to save the opposition leader to a battle against "absolute evil."

### What has the West said and done?

- U.S. President Joe Biden, who imposed a new round of anti-Russian sanctions last week, said on Saturday that Navalny's plight was "totally, totally unfair, totally inappropriate." U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan added on Sunday that the Kremlin had been warned "that there will be consequences if Mr. Navalny dies."
- European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said Monday the bloc holds Russia "responsible" for Navalny's health. Borrell's comment came ahead of a virtual meeting by EU foreign ministers where Navalny's health is due to be addressed, along with other

issues.

**Embed:** <https://twitter.com/JosepBorrellF/status/1383791354216517641>

- More than 70 prominent actors, writers, artists and academics including Jude Law, Benedict Cumberbatch, J.K. Rowling and Thom Yorke have signed an [open letter](#) calling on Putin to allow Navalny immediate access to his doctors.
- A number of international media organizations, including The New York Times and The Washington Post, have also come out in [support](#) of the imprisoned Kremlin critic.

### **What are Russian authorities doing?**

- Russian prison authorities said on Monday they have transferred Navalny to a medical ward in a different prison for “vitamin therapy.” “Navalny’s health condition is assessed as satisfactory and he is examined daily by a general practitioner,” the prison service said in a statement.
- Last week the Kremlin critic said on Instagram that prison administrators are “ready” to start force-feeding him due to his deteriorating health.
- Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has dismissed concerns over Navalny’s situation voiced by Western states. “The state of health of convicts and prisoners on Russian territory cannot and should not be a topic of interest for them,” the state-run TASS news agency quoted Peskov as saying.
- Russia’s Interior Ministry has warned people not to participate in pro-Navalny rallies on Wednesday, saying it “will take all necessary measures to maintain law and order in the regions of the country.”
- Meanwhile, Russian prosecutors have requested that Navalny's network of regional offices and his Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) be added to the list of "terrorist and extremist" organizations that currently includes the Islamic State, the Taliban and Jehovah's Witnesses. The presence of these groups is banned in Russia and participation in them can result in lengthy prison terms.

*AFP contributed reporting.*

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