

Navalny Dissolves Political Network Ahead of Expected 'Extremist' Ruling

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Albert Garnelis / TASS

Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's political network has been disbanded ahead of a court ruling to declare it an "extremist" organization, his senior aide [announced](#) Thursday.

A Moscow court is expected to hand down the decision behind closed doors next month, banning the network's crowd-funded work and putting members and supporters at risk of up to six years in prison.

"We are officially disbanding Navalny's network," Leonid Volkov, the network of regional headquarters' former coordinator, wrote on social media.

"Keeping the work of Navalny's network in its current form will lead immediately to extremism charges and entail criminal sentences for those work there, cooperate with it and help it," he said.

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In a YouTube video, Volkov said the breakup was a “punch in the gut” after four years of work building and expanding the network “in very difficult circumstances.”

“The networks had victories: we canceled corrupt public procurement orders, secured the resignation of thieves and crooks, won elections, protected parks from development projects, helped local activists,” he said.

“All this despite direct orders from the Kremlin to destroy the network of offices,” Volkov said.

Prosecutors in Moscow had suspended the network’s operations Monday, banning it from using bank accounts, posting anything online, organizing protests or taking part in elections. The network’s coordinators in several Russian regions had announced they were suspending operations that day to avoid legal repercussions.

The network’s website shtab.navalny.com was still accessible as of Thursday morning, showing dozens of locations spanning 11 time zones.

Related article: [Russia Orders Navalny Group to Suspend Activities](#)

Prosecutors have also asked the court to brand Navalny's other group, the Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK), as an “extremist” organization.

The Navalny groups’ anticipated “extremist” designations would ban Russia’s most potent opposition force five months ahead of parliamentary elections where the pro-Putin ruling party seeks to overcome historically low approval ratings to maintain its supermajority.

It was not immediately clear how the court ruling will affect Navalny’s “[Smart Voting](#)” strategy that seeks to unseat United Russia party incumbents in September by rallying support behind the most promising challenger.

Volkov only noted in his announcement that “there are dozens of cool and awesome regional politicians, thousands of their supporters, strong and independent political organizations that will deal with investigations and elections, public campaigns and rallies.”

“You will help them and they will succeed.”

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