

Russia Jails Navalny Protester for 4 Years

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Yevgeny Yesenov was among the 10,000 people detained across 100 Russian cities at this winter's protests demanding Navalny's freedom. **Moscow's Presnensky District Court / TASS**

A Moscow court sentenced a Russian businessman to four years in jail Thursday for attacking a riot police officer during a rally in support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny this winter.

Yevgeny Yesenov was among the 10,000 people detained across 100 Russian cities in January and February when they took to the streets demanding freedom for the fierce Putin foe and anti-corruption campaigner. Authorities opened 90 criminal investigations in the wake of the unauthorized rallies and charged dozens of protesters with using violence against law enforcement officers.

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Moscow's Tverskoy District Court [found](#) Yesenov guilty of "using violence that endangered the health of a representative of power" during a Jan. 23 rally and sentenced him to four years

in a prison colony.

State prosecutors had on Wednesday requested a five-year sentence for Yesenov.

Yesenov pleaded guilty but claimed in an appeal that he “did not participate in the rally and [does not support](#) its organizers’ views.”

The 38-year-old businessman from Russia’s majority-Buddhist republic of Kalmykia has received the longest prison sentence out of the 18 people to be convicted so far. The [other](#) 17 were fined, ordered to perform compulsory labor or jailed for up to three and a half years.

Navalny himself is serving two and a half years in prison on charges of violating parole in an old suspended sentence for fraud while recovering abroad from poisoning he blames on the Kremlin.

Moscow denies involvement and questions the claims, voiced by scientists from three European countries and the global chemical weapons watchdog, that Navalny was poisoned with the Soviet-era nerve agent Novichok.

Another Moscow court is expected to start closed-door hearings next month in an “extremism” ruling against Navalny’s political network while lawmakers are swiftly passing legislation that would ban candidates with ties to “extremist” organizations from running for parliament.

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