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On 45th Birthday, Jailed Kremlin Critic Navalny Vows Not to Turn Into 'Caged Animal'

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Sergei Fadeichev / TASS

Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny on Friday said that his biggest achievement this year was not turning into a "caged animal" as he celebrated his 45th birthday behind bars.

The opposition politician is serving a 2.5-year sentence in a notoriously harsh prison colony outside of Moscow on what are widely seen as politically motivated charges.

"Don't think I am a crazy pacifist... I haven't changed any of my convictions," a message posted on Navalny's Instagram said.

"But when I see those where my first reaction would be 'You bastard, I'd strangle you,' I try to push those initial thoughts away...and try with all my strength to understand, forgive and even love them," the post said.

"That is why, I hope, I can say today my biggest achievement this year is that I have stayed

away from becoming a ‘caged animal’.”

Navalny was immediately arrested upon his January return to Moscow from Germany, where he had been recovering from a poison attack with a rare nerve agent that he blames on President Vladimir Putin. He was then given almost three years in jail for failing to show up for parole meetings under a 2014 suspended sentence for fraud charges that have been widely dismissed by human rights groups and Western governments as unfair.

Embed:



Посмотреть эту публикацию в Instagram



Публикация от Алексей Навальный (@navalny)

He recently ended a three-week hunger strike following the advice of his supporters and doctors, who had warned he could die "at any minute."

Also on Friday, Putin signed legislation banning anyone with links to "extremist" organizations from running in elections as Navalny's team awaits a court ruling to label it "extremist." The ban would directly affect several Navalny allies, such as Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) lawyer Lyubov Sobol, who have announced plans to run for the State Duma in September.

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