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Russia Places Exiled Navalny Aide on Wanted List

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Former FBK Director Ivan Zhdanov speaks to the media as police raid FBK's Moscow offices, July 2020.
Alexander Zemlianichenko / AP Photo / TASS

An exiled top associate of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny said Friday that Russian authorities have put him on a wanted list on suspicion of committing an unspecified crime.

Ivan Zhdanov, the former director of Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) which a Russian court declared "extremist" earlier this week, has been living in Lithuania to avoid being jailed in Russia.

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"I don't know what the search is related to, probably with the dozen criminal cases brought against me. It's difficult to figure out which one," Zhdanov wrote on Instagram.

Interfax reported that the Interior Ministry's database of wanted persons only specifies that

Zhdanov is “wanted on a Criminal Code article,” without specifying the crime. The Interior Ministry has not officially commented on Zhdanov’s status.

The police search comes amid what the opposition calls a pressure campaign on dissenters three months ahead of key parliamentary elections, with a new law banning anyone affiliated with Navalny’s “extremist” groups from seeking office.

Several Navalny associates including Zhdanov have faced a number of lawsuits over FBK’s high-profile investigations alleging large-scale corruption among Russia’s political and business elite. Russian courts have consistently sided with the plaintiffs and ordered the opposition to pay large fines for what they ruled to be false or defamatory information.

Related article: Navalny Foundation Director Says Russia Trying to Imprison Father 'for Life'

Russian authorities, riled by the embarrassing video investigations, have in recent years frozen bank accounts linked to Navalny and raided his nationwide political network's offices as part of a money laundering probe his allies say is trumped up.

In April, the Kremlin critic’s team said it accidentally learned that Navalny and Zhdanov have also been charged with creating an organization that “infringes on the rights and liberties of individuals.”

Zhdanov’s father, a former civil servant, is in pre-trial detention in northern Russia on corruption charges that the younger Zhdanov says have been pressed in retaliation for his work at FBK.

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, which denies involvement.

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