

Navalny Allies Face Fresh Criminal Charges

By [AFP](#)

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Ivan Zhdanov, 32, headed the Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) that publishes investigations into the wealth of Russia's elites. [ioannzh / instagram](#)

Two exiled aides of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny were slapped with new criminal charges for helping to finance organizations that have recently been labeled "extremist," Russian investigators said Tuesday.

Navalny's movement is facing unprecedented pressure in Russia as his main groups have been de-facto banned in the country, while the opposition leader is serving two and a half years in prison on old fraud charges.

Related article: [Navalny Team Vows to Fight on After 'Extremism' Ruling](#)

President Vladimir Putin's most vocal domestic critic was sent to jail in February after

returning to Russia from Germany following a near-fatal poisoning attack that he blames on the Kremlin.

Russia's Investigative Committee said on Tuesday that it had launched a criminal case against Navalny allies Leonid Volkov and Ivan Zhdanov over the "collection of funds and provision of financial services deliberately intended to finance an extremist organization."

The charges carry a maximum penalty of eight years in jail.

Volkov, 40, was in charge of Navalny's disbanded network of regional offices. Zhdanov, 32, headed the Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) that publishes investigations into the wealth of Russia's elites.

The organisations were labeled "extremist" in June for allegedly plotting an uprising with support from the West.

"Knowing that these organizations were recognized as extremist, Volkov and Zhdanov announced the continuation of their illegal activities and organized a fundraiser," investigators said in a statement.

Both Volkov and Zhdanov reside outside Russia and are wanted by Moscow on other criminal charges.

"I've already lost count of the number of criminal cases that have been launched against me," Zhdanov wrote on his Instagram on Tuesday.

Lawsuit against Putin's spokesman

Also on Tuesday, a Moscow court dropped a libel lawsuit filed by Navalny in late March against Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov over comments suggesting the opposition figure has links with the CIA.

Lawyer Valeria Arshinova said on Twitter that the court turned down the case "without any evidence from Peskov and without his participation in the court hearings."

Navalny's close allies still in Russia are under close law enforcement supervision, some under house arrest.

Related article: [Russian Opposition Figure Lyubov Sobol Sentenced Over Pro-Navalny Protests](#)

Last week, Navalny's brother Oleg was handed a one-year suspended sentence for breaching coronavirus rules by calling on Russians to attend an unsanctioned rally. Key ally Lyubov Sobol was sentenced to a year and a half of restricted movement in the same case.

Russia's state censor in July blocked nearly 50 Navalny-linked websites and allies say the media watchdog is also seeking to suspend their social media channels.

Russia's opposition says authorities have stepped up a campaign of intimidation against dissenters ahead of a parliamentary vote in September, allegations the Kremlin has rejected.

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