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Navalny Spokeswoman Sentenced for Mass Protest 'Coronavirus Violations'

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Kira Yarmysh is at least the fourth Navalny ally to be convicted for violating Covid-19 measures by promoting protests calling for his release. **Maxim Shipenkov / EPA / TASS**

Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh has been sentenced over her role in this winter's protests calling for his release, Russian media reported Monday.

Yarmysh is at least the fourth Navalny ally to be convicted for violating coronavirus restrictions on mass events by calling on supporters to take to the streets in January in what has become known as the "sanitary case.

Moscow's Preobrazhensky district court found Yamyrsh guilty and sentenced her to 1.5 years of so-called "restricted freedom."

The punishment bans Yarmysh from leaving Moscow and attending mass gatherings in addition to requiring monthly check-ups with probation officers, according to the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper.

Yarmysh's Twitter account noted that the judge has released the Navalny ally from house arrest, which would have lasted until Jan. 6, 2022, until her sentence takes effect.

Related article: Russian Opposition Figure Lyubov Sobol Sentenced Over Pro-Navalny Protests

Prosecutors last week requested two years of restricted freedom for Yarmysh, who has been Navalny's spokeswoman since 2014.

Earlier this month, the Preobrazhensky district court sentenced fellow Navalny allies Lyubov Sobol and Nikolai Lyaskin to 1.5 years and 1 year, respectively, of "restricted freedom" as part of the same case.

Sobol was reported to have fled Russia after the court ruling, though she has yet to confirm or deny the news. Observers have suggested that Yarmysh's ruling was an unspoken invitation for her to leave Russia as well.

Navalny's brother Oleg was handed a one-year suspended sentence for the violation of Covid-19 restrictions.

Several other Navalny allies have fled Russia in recent months to avoid criminal prosecution for a variety of charges they say are politically motivated.

Navalny himself is serving a 2.5-year prison sentence for breaking probation terms, a verdict that he says was politically motivated after he survived a nerve-agent poisoning last August.

A Moscow court declared Navalny's political and activist network "extremist" in June, outlawing Russia's most vocal force opposing President Vladimir Putin ahead of crunch elections next month. Authorities last month blocked 49 websites belonging to or linked to Navalny and demanded Twitter and YouTube to block his allies' accounts.

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