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Russian Court Jails Navalny Protester for 3 Years

By AFP

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Tens of thousands of Navalny supporters took to the streets across Russia. **Peter Kovalev / TASS**

A St. Petersburg court on Monday sentenced a Russian man to three years in a penal colony for hitting a police officer at a rally in support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

According to the prosecutors, Ilya Pershin, a local artist, hit a policeman at least twice in the chest with his elbow and kicked him in the knee at a January protest in central St. Petersburg.

Pershin, who was detained in February, has maintained his innocence. His supporters say a policeman ran after him but slipped and fell down.

In January, Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's most prominent domestic critic, returned to Russia from Germany after undergoing treatment for poisoning with a nerve agent.

He was detained upon arrival and imprisoned in February.

Around that time, tens of thousands of Navalny supporters took to the streets across Russia and more than 10,000 were arrested. Some protesters were later sentenced to prison.

Ahead of parliamentary elections scheduled to take place on September 17-19, Russian authorities have outlawed Navalny's organisations and barred his allies from running.

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