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Russia Jails Former Navalny Regional Head on 'Extremist' Charges

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Lilia Chanysheva. **teamchanysheva / facebook**

A court in central Russia has jailed an ally of imprisoned Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, making her the first member of his network to be arrested on retroactive charges of extremism, her lawyer said Wednesday.

Liliya Chanysheva is the former head of Navalny's political headquarters in the city of Ufa 1,000 kilometers east of Moscow. The headquarters disbanded last spring in anticipation of a court ruling that outlawed Navalny's groups as "extremist" organizations.

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Chanysheva, 39, is the first Navalny ally to be arrested on the charges of creating an "extremist" organization since that ruling. Similar criminal cases were previously opened against Navalny and several of his key associates, all of whom have fled the country.

An Ufa court ruled Wednesday to keep Chanysheva in custody for two months until Jan. 9. She faces between six and 10 years in jail if found guilty.

Lawyer Vladimir Voronin said the judge took 20 minutes to deliberate Chanysheva's case despite her arguments that she may be in the early stages of pregnancy.

Voronin said the defense plans to appeal the court ruling.

Chanysheva tweeted about her arrest Tuesday, the same day that police-monitoring activists reported searches at the homes of several other Navalny activists in other Russian regions.

Navalny was sentenced to 2.5 years in prison in February on old fraud charges he calls politically motivated after surviving a nerve agent poisoning he blames on the Kremlin. His arrest upon returning to Russia from recovery in Germany helped spark nationwide protests where thousands were detained.

A Moscow court in June blacklisted Navalny's political and activist networks — both peaceful opposition movements — as "extremist." Navalny shut down the regional network in April in a fruitless attempt to shield its leaders and members from criminal prosecution.

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