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Jailed Kremlin Critic Navalny Calls on France to Vote for Macron

By AFP

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Alexei Navalny. **Moskva News Agency**

Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny on Wednesday called on French voters to support incumbent President Emmanuel Macron in the second round of the presidential vote this weekend, accusing his far-right opponent Marine Le Pen's party of links to President Vladimir Putin.

"I certainly, without hesitation, urge the people of France to vote for Emmanuel Macron on April 24," Navalny said on Twitter, posting both in French and English.

Navalny added that he was "shocked" that Le Pen's party received a 9-million-euro loan from "Putin's notorious money-laundering outfit," the First Czech-Russian Bank.

"I don't doubt for a minute that negotiations with these people and deals with them included a shadowy political part as well," 45-year-old Navalny said.

"This is corruption. This is selling political influence to Putin," he added.

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He said France was "close" to his heart and he felt he could address the French for a number of reasons.

"I'm in jail due to a criminal complaint by a French company," he said, referring to French cosmetics company Yves Rocher.

In 2014, a Russian court found Navalny guilty of defrauding the Russian subsidiary of Yves Rocher in a ruling later declared "arbitrary" by the European Court of Human Rights.

He was handed a suspended sentence of three and a half years, but was ordered in 2021 to serve jail time.

"I will root for France, the French, and @EmmanuelMacron," Navalny said on Twitter.

In 2020, Navalny survived a poisoning attack with Novichok, a Soviet-designed nerve agent, he blames on the Kremlin.

Last month a Russian court found him guilty of new charges of embezzlement and contempt of court and extended his sentence to nine years in a higher security prison.

Navalny and his team have published videos about the wealth of Russian elites, garnering millions of views on YouTube.

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