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‘Our Motherland Needs Saving,' Navalny Says 2 Years After Return and Imprisonment

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Russian opposition activist Alexei Navalny being detained upon arrival at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport on Jan. 17, 2021. **Sergei Bobylev /TASS**

Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny on Tuesday vowed to continue his political activism on the two-year anniversary of his return to Russia and subsequent imprisonment.

Navalny, 46, was arrested upon arrival at Moscow’s Sheremetyevo Airport on Jan. 17, 2021, after recovering in Germany from a near-fatal 2020 poisoning he blames on the Kremlin. Western scientists identified the poison as the banned Soviet-designed nerve agent Novichok, while investigative journalists linked the attack to Russia’s security services.

The prominent opposition figure is now serving a nine-year prison sentence for fraud charges that critics dismiss as politically motivated, with new terrorism charges putting him at risk of seeing 30 more years of jail.

“I said it two years ago, and I will say it again: Russia is my country,” Navalny wrote in a defiant social media post, emphasizing the importance of his opposition efforts “even if only symbolic in my current limited capacity.”

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Despite concerns over his health and the prospect of spending decades behind bars, Navalny pledged to write “however many” anniversary posts “it may take.”

“I’m not going to surrender my country to [Russia’s ruling elite],” he said. “I will do all I can, try to do what is right, and urge everyone not to abandon hope.”

“Our miserable, exhausted Motherland needs to be saved. It has been pillaged, wounded, dragged into an aggressive war, and turned into a prison run by the most unscrupulous and deceitful scoundrels.”

Navalny has denounced President Vladimir Putin’s decision to send troops to Ukraine in February 2022.

He became one of Russia's most prominent opposition figures after mass anti-Putin protests in 2011. He has since built a huge social media following with videos exposing corruption among government officials.

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