The Moscow Times
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Western Celebrities, Writers, Academics Urge Putin to Grant Navalny Proper Medical Care

April 28, 2023



Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, detained upon arrival at Moscow Sheremetyevo Airport on January 17, 2021. **Sergei Bobylev / TASS**

Over 100 prominent Western academics, writers and celebrities have called on President Vladimir Putin to urgently provide Alexei Navalny with access to necessary medical care as the Kremlin critic's allies sound the alarm about his deteriorating health in prison.

"We call on you, Mr. President, to ensure that Alexey Navalny is immediately given the medical treatment and care that he urgently requires — and is entitled to under Russian law. As someone who has sworn to uphold the law, you have only to do so," reads the open letter published in The Economist on Friday.

The call has been signed by 130 figures including actors Benedict Cumberbatch, Stephen Fry and David Duchovny; Nobel Prize-winning Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk; English writers Neil Gaiman and J.K. Rawling; academics Timothy Snyder and Sam Greene; Polish-American

journalist Anne Applebaum; Radiohead frontman Thom Yorke and ABBA member Björn Ulvaeus.

Related article: Ailing Navalny Ordered to 6 Months in Punishment Cell

Navalny has been imprisoned in Russia since January 2021, when he returned to Moscow from Germany after recovering from a near-fatal poisoning with what Western scientists determined was the banned nerve agent Novichok.

The vocal Kremlin critic is serving a nine-year sentence in a penal colony in the Vladimir region east of Moscow, but this week he said his jail term could be extended to life imprisonment.

He and his supporters say his imprisonment is a politically motivated effort to silence him.

Navalny is now "exhibiting symptoms of a severe neurological disorder — constant back pain and the loss of sensation in his legs and hands. In addition, he is suffering from a severe cough and fever," said the Friday letter.

"As a Russian citizen, he has the lawful right to be examined and treated by a doctor of his choice."

In January, dozens of Russian doctors signed an open letter urging Russian President Vladimir Putin "to stop abusing" Navalny and demanding the opposition politician be given a "full examination" and access to proper medical treatment.

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