The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

European Court Condemns Russia Over Navalny 2020 Poisoning

By AFP

June 06, 2023



Protesters gather outside the Russian Embassy in support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, in London on June 4, 2023. **Justin Tallis / AFP**

The European Court of Human Rights Tuesday condemned Russia for failing to properly investigate the 2020 poisoning of opposition figure Alexei Navalny which the West says was an assassination bid.

The Strasbourg-based ECHR said Russia had notably failed "to explore the allegations of a possible political motive for the attempted murder, as well as possible involvement of state agents," unanimously finding Russia had violated the European Convention on Human Rights.

It said Russia had refused to open criminal proceedings into the poisoning, which led to Navalny falling into a coma and being put on life support.

The anti-corruption campaigner, seen by supporters as a potential political rival of President Vladimir Putin, fell ill while on a flight from Siberia.

He was later evacuated to Germany where he recovered but was imprisoned on his return to Moscow and has been behind bars ever since.

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The ECHR noted that tests by the German government had shown "definite proof" of the presence of the chemical nerve agent Novichok in Navalny's system.

The court said the inquiry by Russia was not open to scrutiny and Navalny had not been allowed to participate.

The investigation was not "capable of leading to the establishment of the relevant facts and the identification and, if appropriate, punishment of those responsible," it said.

"It (the probe) therefore could not be considered adequate."

Russia was ordered to pay Navalny 40,000 euros ($43,000) in damages.

The ECHR is part of the pan-European rights body the Council of Europe from which Russia was expelled in the wake of its invasion of Ukraine last year.

However the ECHR still has a backlog of cases filed by Russian nationals before then and is continuing to issue verdicts.

It says Russia has a binding legal obligation to implement ECHR judgments concerning Moscow's actions or violations up until Sept. 16, 2022.

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