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Navalny's Mother Says Authorities Demanding Secret Funeral for Late Activist

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Lyudmila Navalnaya. **Navalny LIVE / YouTube**

The mother of late Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny said Thursday that Russian investigators had finally allowed her to see her son's body but are now pressuring her to hold a funeral for him in secret.

“Looking into my eyes, they [investigators] told me they’ll do something to my son’s body if I don’t agree to a secret funeral,” Lyudmila Navalnaya said in a video published on the activist’s YouTube channel.

“I won’t agree to that. I want all of you who cherish Alexei, and for whom his death was a personal tragedy, to have a chance to say your goodbyes,” she said.

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> Обращение мамы Алексея pic.twitter.com/NPOcImP5J4
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> — Yulia Navalnaya (@yulia_navalnaya) February 22, 2024

Navalny died on Friday in an Arctic prison where he was being held on charges widely seen as retribution for his opposition to President Vladimir Putin.

Investigators earlier this week told the late activist's family and lawyers that they planned to conduct a two-week "chemical examination" to determine the cause of his death.

"By law, they should have given me Alexei's body immediately, but instead they're blackmailing me and setting conditions on where and how Alexei should be buried," Navalnaya said in the video.

"Investigators told me point blank: 'Time isn't on your side, the corpse is decomposing'," she continued.

Navalny's spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh said Thursday that a medical report — which Lyudmila Navalnaya said she had signed Wednesday evening — indicated that the 47-year-old activist died of "natural causes."

A source close to the Kremlin told The Moscow Times this week that officials are discussing "how to make sure Navalny's mourning and funeral do not turn into a political demonstration and spoil the election for Putin."

"Various options have been proposed, down to the very cynical one of not releasing the body to his relatives until after the election," the source said.

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