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Russian Supreme Court Upholds Navalny's 19-Year 'Extremism' Sentence

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A screen shows Alexei Navalny and his lawyer Vadim Kobzev in court. **Alexei Golenishchev / TASS**

Russia's Supreme Court has upheld a 19-year prison sentence for Alexei Navalny, state media reported on Monday, more than five months after the opposition activist died in an Arctic prison.

In a closed-door hearing held on July 2, the court rejected an appeal by Navalny's defense team against a nearly two-decade sentence for creating an "extremist community." The late activist began serving that sentence in December at the notorious "Polar Wolf" penal colony, where he died under unclear circumstances on Feb. 16.

"The verdict of the Moscow City Court was left unchanged, and the cassation appeal was dismissed," a spokesperson for the Supreme Court told reporters, referring to the August 2023 ruling against the activist on a string of charges his supporters described as an attempt to keep him out of politics forever.

Russia's Supreme Court also ruled against an appeal by Daniel Kholodny, the former technical

director of Navalny's YouTube channel. Kholodny was sentenced to eight years in a penal colony in the same "extremism" trial as Navalny.

Russia designated Navalny's activist network, including the disbanded Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK), as "extremist" in 2021, placing employees, volunteers and supporters at risk of criminal prosecution. Most of Navalny's associates fled the country following the designation.

Since then, authorities in Russia have handed down lengthy prison sentences to the few Navalny allies who chose to remain in the country.

In May, a Siberian court upheld the nine-year prison sentence for Ksenia Fadeyeva, a former coordinator for Navalny in the Tomsk region. Lilia Chanysheva, another Navalny coordinator in the republic of Bashkortostan, was sentenced in April to nine-and-a-half years on "extremism" charges.

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