

Russian Activist Konstantin Kotov Flees Russia Ahead of 'Extremism' Trial

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Konstantin Kotov. **Dasha Trofimova / OVD-Info**

Activist Konstantin Kotov fled Russia ahead of his trial for donating money to Alexei Navalny's political organizations, which the Russian authorities have banned as "extremist."

Kotov, a programmer, revealed his escape in an [interview](#) with the independent news website Mediazona published on Friday.

The activist was [detained](#) in August and placed under house arrest on charges of financing "extremist" activity. If convicted, he could face up to eight years in prison. Although he was scheduled to appear in a Moscow court on Friday, Kotov told Mediazona that he fled to neighboring Lithuania "several days ago."

"I realized there was absolutely no point in playing roulette with the court and the investigation," Kotov said. "It was better to take fate into my own hands and gain my own freedom."

Related article: [Former Navalny Lawyers Sentenced to Prison on 'Extremism' Charges](#)

Authorities accused Kotov of donating 2,500 rubles (\$24) to Navalny's organizations in five installments of 500 rubles each. Navalny's political organizations were declared extremist by a Russian court in 2021, exposing their employees, volunteers and supporters to criminal prosecution.

Kotov said his decision to leave Russia was influenced by the December sentencing of heart surgeon Ivan Tishchenko, who [received](#) four years in prison for donating 3,500 rubles (\$34) to Navalny's groups.

Another activist, Viktor Levakov, was also placed under house arrest in August for donating 3,500 rubles to the banned organizations. Levakov had volunteered as a security guard at a makeshift memorial to opposition figure Boris Nemtsov, who was gunned down outside the Kremlin in 2015.

Kotov gained prominence in opposition circles after being sentenced to four years in prison for participating in street protests during the 2019 Moscow election. His sentence was later [reduced](#) to 18 months following a review ordered by President Vladimir Putin.

News of Kotov's escape from house arrest and ultimately Russia coincided with the sentencing of three former Navalny lawyers, who were [sentenced](#) to prison for alleged involvement in "extremist" activities.

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