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Russian Court Jails Exiled Navalny Ally Volkov 18 Years in Absentia

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Leonid Volkov. **A.Savin**

A Russian military court sentenced Leonid Volkov, a top aide to the late opposition leader Alexei Navalny, to 18 years in prison in absentia on charges including extremism and wartime censorship, Russian news agencies reported on Wednesday.

Volkov, who has lived in Lithuania since 2019, was placed on a wanted list in 2021 following nationwide protests calling for Navalny's release from jail. That same year, Russian authorities banned Navalny's political and activist groups as "extremist," exposing employees and supporters to potential criminal charges.

The Second Western District Military Court in Moscow found Volkov guilty on more than 40 counts under nine different criminal charges, according to Interfax.

The charges include organizing and financing an "extremist" organization, justifying terrorism, "rehabilitating Nazism," spreading "false information" about the Russian military, endangering minors and creating an NGO that allegedly violates citizens' rights. He

was also convicted of fraud and vandalism.

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The court imposed an additional fine of 2 million rubles ($25,300) and banned Volkov from using the internet for 10 years. The sentence, which can be appealed, would only take effect if Volkov is extradited to Russia.

Volkov mocked the verdict on social media with a series of sarcastic posts. "Damn. What to do?" he wrote.

The trial was held behind closed doors. Russian media previously reported that authorities cited concerns that Volkov's supporters might stage "extremist or terrorist acts" against those involved in the case.

A former member of the Yekaterinburg City Duma, Volkov led Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) from 2021 to 2023. He was added to Russia's list of "terrorists and extremists" in 2022 and later designated a "foreign agent."

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