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Yulia Navalnaya Rejects Claims of 'Fictitious Employees' as FBK Infighting Goes Public

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Ivan Zhdanov. **Dimitar Dilkoff / AFP**

Yulia Navalnaya, the widow of the late Russian opposition activist Alexei Navalny, has dismissed accusations of financial impropriety within the Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK), which her husband founded in 2011 to investigate corruption among government officials.

Ivan Zhdanov, who served as FBK's CEO from July 2022 until his removal in September, called for an internal audit of the organization after claiming in a recent interview that former chairman Leonid Volkov had hired "fictitious employees."

Zhdanov also alleged that Volkov's oversight led to a series of criminal charges in Russia against individuals who donated to FBK using the U.S. payment processing software Stripe. Volkov denied the claims.

On Monday, Navalnaya pushed back against the allegations, expressing "shock" at Zhdanov's

public criticism.

“First off, it’s a lie. Second, if it were true, then Ivan, as CEO, should have borne full responsibility for it,” Navalnaya wrote on X.

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She said she personally made the decision to have Zhdanov removed from his post last year, but did not fire him from FBK entirely.

“When I first informed Ivan of my decision, I had a notebook in front of me with several pages of specific grievances, from a total loss of interest in his work in favor of personal projects, to ignoring my instructions and management’s decisions,” Navalnaya said.

“It was obvious to me that he didn’t care what was happening in the organization where he served as CEO,” she added.

Navalnaya also said that following Zhdanov’s removal, FBK conducted an internal audit that revealed no wrongdoing related to his accusations against Volkov.

The controversy follows recent allegations from another former staffer, who accused FBK’s senior leadership of suppressing internal dissent.

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