

Russian Activist Fined Over ‘Party of Crooks and Thieves’ T-Shirt

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A rally against fraud in the State Duma elections on Bolotnaya Square in Moscow on Dec. 10, 2011.
Zurab Zavakhadze / VoA

A court in the Russian city of Kostroma has fined an activist for displaying “extremist symbols” over a photograph of him wearing a T-shirt with a slogan mocking the ruling United Russia party, the RusNews news outlet [reported](#).

Andrei Tarasov, a former parliamentary candidate for the liberal Yabloko party, was fined 1,000 rubles (\$12) by Kostroma’s Sverdlovsky District Court. The T-shirt bore the words “I’m against the party of crooks and thieves” alongside an image of a person kicking a bear, United Russia’s symbol.

An expert enlisted by the Interior Ministry deemed the slogan extremist on the grounds that it was attributed to the late Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

The expert’s assessment said the phrase “delegitimized the ruling party in the eyes of voters” and “serves as a marker of opposition affiliation.”

Related article: [St. Petersburg Court Fines Yabloko Leader \\$12 for Writing Peace Slogans on Ballot](#)

The case followed a complaint by Communist Party member Sergei Shpotin, who ran for governor of the Kostroma region in 2025.

Shpotin complained that his fellow party members were being “dragged through the courts” while “this new liberal gets away with absolutely everything.”

The phrase “party of crooks and thieves” has long been used to describe United Russia. Opposition politician Boris Nemtsov used it during a Radio Liberty broadcast in 2010, and Navalny later popularized it on his LiveJournal blog.

The slogan was widely adopted by opposition groups and individual voters during the 2011 parliamentary election campaign.

Banners, flags and stickers reading “Down with the party of crooks and thieves” became a familiar sight at mass protests in 2011–2012, held against the backdrop of Vladimir Putin’s planned return to the presidency.

A June 2012 poll by the independent Levada Center found that 42% of respondents agreed with the description of United Russia as the “party of crooks and thieves.”

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