

Anti-Kremlin Protesters Turn to European Court

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Two men who were convicted in and then amnestied from an ongoing case involving anti-Kremlin protests that took a violent turn in 2012 filed a complaint against Russia with the European Court of Human Rights on Wednesday.

Vladimir Akimenkov and Leonid Kovyazin alleged in their complaint that their rights to free speech and free assembly had been violated in connection with the case, their lawyer Dmitry Arganovsky told RAPSI. Currently, the court is deciding whether or not to examine the complaints on a priority basis, he said.

Akimenkov and Kovyazin were among 10 individuals amnestied late last year after initially being convicted and sentenced to prison for their participation in what prosecutors referred to as mass riots on Moscow's Bolotnaya Ploshchad on May 6, 2012.

Many of the dozens of suspects in the so-called Bolotnoye case have rejected the term "mass riots."

On Tuesday, opposition activist Alexei Navalny testified in detail about the protest, saying demonstrators were provoked by the authorities.

According to his testimony, city authorities changed the route of the sanctioned march without informing the organizers of the changes, triggering chaos when police attempted to block demonstrators from crossing a bridge, and resulting in a bottleneck of confused demonstrators.

"Then mass detentions began, officers dragged people into police vans. People got upset, they flailed about with their arms and legs. They were stressed, they were trying to get to a spot where there was more room. They didn't understand why police were grabbing them, they didn't understand what they were supposed to do so that they'd stop being beaten," Navalny was cited by Newsru.com as saying at a hearing in the case of four other defendants on Tuesday.

"It later became known that the Interior Ministry and the Mayor's Office actually made the decision to change the route of the march, and they intentionally did not inform the organizers," Navalny said.

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