

Court Upholds Ban on Navalny's Website

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Moscow's Tagansky District Court ruled on Wednesday that the federal media watchdog's ban on anti-corruption crusader Alexei Navalny's website in early January was legal, thereby dismissing Navalny's suit against the media watchdog.

In accordance with Russia's law on extremism, the federal media watchdog, Roskomnadzor, can block entire websites at the request of prosecutors if "extremist" content is present.

Prosecutors had requested the ban on Navalny's website over what they said was an appeal to the public to attend an unsanctioned rally on Jan. 15.

The rally, set to be held on the day of Navalny and his brother's sentencing in an embezzlement case, was expected to see a turnout of several thousand people. The event proved to be so controversial that social networking site Facebook blocked a page advertising it at the request of Russian prosecutors.

The sentencing was later rescheduled to Dec. 30, a move widely seen as a bid to prevent the scheduled rally from taking place.

Ivan Zhdanov, a representative for Navalny, argued in court Wednesday that the ban on Navalny's website was illegal since the information about the protest had been deleted at the request of prosecutors. Zhdanov also claimed prosecutors had not proven that the information in question was illegal.

"Navalny's removal of the published information is not proof that he has recognized the information as illegal," Zhdanov said, Interfax reported.

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