

Victory Day Amnesty Frees Navalny Ally of Community Service

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Georgy Albuov

An ally of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny who was sentenced in April to community service over the alleged theft of a piece of street art, was relieved of his community service sentence in connection with a sweeping amnesty adopted in honor of the 70th anniversary of Victory Day, the TASS news agency reported Monday.

Georgy Albuov, an employee of Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, had been ordered to complete 240 hours of community service after he was found guilty of having stolen a painting by a street artist from a fence in the city of Vladimir.

On Monday prosecutors moved to pardon Albuov. "In my opinion Albuov is eligible for the amnesty [adopted to celebrate the anniversary of the Allied victory against Nazi Germany] since his sentence does not require incarceration," deputy prosecutor of Vladimir, Stepan Volodin, was quoted by news site The Village as saying during the hearing. The motion was sustained by the court.

In June 2014, law enforcement officers seized a painting by street artist Sergei Sotov during a raid of Navalny's apartment. Investigators claimed that the artwork — which they said had been given to Navalny by Albuov and fellow activist Nikita Kulachenkov — had been stolen. Sotov later said he had not approached police and did not wish to make any claims against Navalny or his associates.

Around 127,000 convicts had already been set free under the amnesty, state-run news agency RIA Novosti reported Monday. The vast majority of them — 106,000 of them — were serving sentences that did not involve imprisonment.

The amnesty was expected to free up to 400,000 convicts within half a year, Gazeta.ru reported last week, but in some regions it stumbled over bureaucratic hurdles.

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