# Russian courts impose severe sentences on Navalny ally and opposition figure amid Kremlin crackdown



Courts in Russia are tightening their grip on opposition figures, with recent sentences underscoring the Kremlin's ongoing crackdown on dissent. Leonid Volkov, a prominent associate of the late opposition leader Alexei Navalny, was sentenced in absentia to 18 years in prison on multiple criminal charges, including justifying terrorism and organizing an extremist group. This latest conviction comes amid broader efforts to silence voices that dissent against President Vladimir Putin's regime.

The Second Western District Military Court in Moscow found Volkov guilty of 40 separate counts, a move widely seen as politically motivated. Along with the prison sentence, he faces a hefty fine of 2 million rubles (approximately $25,000) and a ban on internet access for a decade. Following the verdict, Volkov, who has been living outside Russia for several years to escape persecution, took to social media to express his defiance. "Oh no! They banned me from the internet for 10 years as prosecutors requested, but I've already been using it," he jested, reflecting a spirit that contradicts the grim realities imposed by the state.

Volkov's history in the political arena is significant. As the leader of Navalny’s regional offices and election campaigns, he has been an activist against corruption and state abuses. His leadership of the Anti-Corruption Foundation from 2021 until 2023 led to his designation as a terrorist and extremist by Russian authorities, further entrenching his status as a target for political repression.

In a separate but related development, Lev Shlosberg, a senior member of the Yabloko opposition party, was placed under house arrest. Initially detained on charges of discrediting the Russian military—stemming from his calls for a ceasefire in Ukraine—Shlosberg's situation mirrors Volkov's in that his actions have been branded as politically motivated. Having previously received the label of “foreign agent,” Shlosberg faces accusations based on new legislation that obliges individuals to indicate this status in their publications. He denied any wrongdoing, asserting that he complies with the law’s requirements. Conviction could also lead to significant imprisonment for Shlosberg, further complicating the landscape for opposition within Russia.

The context surrounding these legal decisions is crucial. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the government has intensified its campaign against dissenters. Targets have included not only political leaders but also civil society organisations, human rights activists, and various minority groups. The Kremlin's strategy appears aimed at quelling any form of resistance in a climate increasingly intolerant of opposition voices.

The state’s actions come on the heels of a broader crackdown orchestrated against independent politicians. This includes police raids and confiscations at various political offices, notably seen in earlier incidents where Shlosberg's Yabloko party office was searched. Such measures illustrate the regime's aggressive tactics in suppressing discourse critical of state policies.

As the political climate in Russia becomes increasingly hostile, the narratives surrounding figures like Volkov and Shlosberg serve as potent reminders of the perils confronting those who stand against authoritarian rule. The ongoing struggles of these opposition figures reflect the broader socio-political landscape, highlighting the risks faced by dissenters in a country where the grip of power has tightened dramatically.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/moscow-courts-navalny-nazism-ukraine-b2768101.html), [[2]](https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/01/17/russia-charges-opposition-politician-shlosberg-with-violating-foreign-agent-law-a87650)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/moscow-courts-navalny-nazism-ukraine-b2768101.html), [[3]](https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/10/02/russia-opens-criminal-case-against-opposition-politician-shlosberg-a86545), [[6]](https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/04/19/poland-detains-suspects-alleged-organizer-in-attack-on-navalny-ally-volkov-a84896)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/07/06/russian-police-search-pskov-yabloko-office-a81749), [[5]](https://www.dw.com/en/navalny-ally-leonid-volkov-attacked-near-home-in-lithuania/a-68509447), [[7]](https://www.dw.com/en/leonid-volkov-2-held-in-poland-over-attack-on-navalny-aide/a-68867414)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/moscow-courts-navalny-nazism-ukraine-b2768101.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/01/17/russia-charges-opposition-politician-shlosberg-with-violating-foreign-agent-law-a87650> - In January 2025, Russian authorities charged Lev Shlosberg, a senior member of the Yabloko opposition party, with violating the 'foreign agent' law. Shlosberg, who has consistently opposed Russia's invasion of Ukraine, was accused of failing to comply with the law's requirements, including labeling his publications appropriately. He denied the charges, stating he had always adhered to the law's stipulations. The case is widely viewed as politically motivated, reflecting the Kremlin's ongoing crackdown on dissenting voices. Shlosberg faces potential imprisonment if convicted.
3. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/10/02/russia-opens-criminal-case-against-opposition-politician-shlosberg-a86545> - In October 2024, Russian authorities initiated a criminal case against Lev Shlosberg, deputy leader of the Yabloko party, for allegedly failing to disclose his status as a 'foreign agent' in public statements. The Investigative Committee accused him of evading duties stipulated by the 'foreign agent' legislation, a criminal offense punishable by up to two years in prison. This move is part of a broader crackdown on independent politicians and dissent since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.
4. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/07/06/russian-police-search-pskov-yabloko-office-a81749> - In July 2023, Russian police conducted searches at the Pskov regional office of the liberal Yabloko party, shortly after authorities labeled its chairman, Lev Shlosberg, a 'foreign agent.' The police confiscated office equipment, personal laptops, and cellphones of employees and activists present at the office. The search was reportedly prompted by Shlosberg's alleged failure to refer to a certain organization by its official 'terrorist' status during a live stream on his YouTube channel.
5. <https://www.dw.com/en/navalny-ally-leonid-volkov-attacked-near-home-in-lithuania/a-68509447> - In March 2024, Leonid Volkov, a close associate of the late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, was attacked near his home in Vilnius, Lithuania. Volkov was struck 15 times in the leg and had his arm broken during the assault. He described the attack as a 'characteristic bandit hello' from Putin's henchmen. Volkov has been a prominent figure in Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation and has faced increasing pressure from Russian authorities.
6. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/04/19/poland-detains-suspects-alleged-organizer-in-attack-on-navalny-ally-volkov-a84896> - In April 2024, Polish authorities detained three individuals in connection with the March attack on Leonid Volkov in Vilnius, Lithuania. The suspects are alleged to have been involved in the assault on Volkov, a close associate of the late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda thanked Poland for its cooperation in apprehending the suspects, who are expected to be handed over to Lithuania after legal proceedings.
7. <https://www.dw.com/en/leonid-volkov-2-held-in-poland-over-attack-on-navalny-aide/a-68867414> - In April 2024, two individuals were detained in Poland in connection with the March attack on Leonid Volkov, a close associate of the late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Volkov was assaulted outside his home in Vilnius, Lithuania, where he lives in exile. The attack involved smashing his car window, spraying tear gas into his eyes, and repeatedly hitting him with a hammer. Volkov accused Russian President Vladimir Putin's 'henchmen' of responsibility for the attack.