

URGENT ACTION

CONCERNS ABOUT NAVALNY'S WHEREABOUTS

Aleksei Navalny's fate and whereabouts have been unknown since his lawyers last heard of him on 5 December. On 11 December, officials at the penal colony where he was serving an unjust 19-year jail sentence notified his lawyers that he was no longer officially listed in that penal colony. It is possible that he may be in transit to another prison colony, which can last weeks without any information provided to the prisoner's relatives. Transfers nearly always put inmates' health and well-being at risk as they are exposed to mistreatment and harassment. Aleksei Navalny has been constantly targeted for harsher treatment by prison administrations since his arbitrary arrest in January 2021.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Arkady Aleksandrovich Gostev
Director of the Federal Penitentiary Service
Zhitnaya Street 14
GSP-1
119991 Moscow
Russian Federation
Email: udmail@fsin.gov.ru

Dear Director of the Federal Penitentiary Service,

I am alarmed by reports that the prison authorities have refused to disclose **Aleksei Navalny's** fate and whereabouts after he was last reported to be in custody in the IK-6 colony in Vladimir Oblast. I am also concerned not only by Aleksei Navalny's unjust imprisonment, but also him being constantly targeted for harsher treatment by prison administrations under your control. I understand that Russian authorities have refused to provide any information about the fate and whereabouts of Aleksei Navalny since his lawyers last heard of him on 5 December. While there is a possibility that he may be in transit to another prison colony, the authorities have an obligation to promptly make available the information about prisoner transfers.

Aleksei Navalny's conditions in prison amount to torture or other ill-treatment, and this situation only increases the risks he faces. I am aware that Aleksei Navalny was placed in a punishment isolation cell (so-called SHIZO) 23 times. While in this cell, he was prohibited from receiving visits and calling his relatives. Despite being entitled to visits by law, he has not been able to get a single visit from his family in over a year and is also restricted from receiving letters from them. His time for eating is also restricted to up to 15 minutes, and faces other restrictions for buying additional food in the prison shop. This treatment puts Aleksei Navalny's life and health at risk.

The repeated punishments of Aleksei Navalny by prison administrations are reprisals for his legitimate political activities and civil society activism. It is obvious that their purpose is to make his conditions in prison, where he must not be in the first place, even harsher.

I urge you to immediately disclose Aleksei Navalny's fate and whereabouts. While I understand that you have no power to release Aleksei Navalny, though he must be released immediately and unconditionally, I also urge you to ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and that his treatment in any prison institution and while in transit complies with international law and standards. All those suspected of responsibility for Aleksei Navalny's ill-treatment, including those among the IK-6 administration, should be immediately suspended and you must ensure that they face disciplinary, administrative or criminal proceedings as appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Aleksei Navalny is a prominent Russian opposition politician, anti-corruption campaigner and critic of President Vladimir Putin and the Russian government. In August 2020, he was poisoned with what experts later concluded to be the military-grade nerve agent Novichok. With the acquiescence of the Russian authorities, he was evacuated to Berlin, Germany, for treatment while in a coma.

After recovering, Aleksei Navalny returned to Moscow on 17 January 2021 and was immediately arbitrarily arrested. He was accused of violating the conditions of parole under an earlier politically motivated conditional (non-custodial) sentence. This conditional sentence was replaced with a two years and eight months' custodial sentence on 4 February 2021. On 22 March 2022, he was convicted on further arbitrary and politically-motivated charges, including fraud, and sentenced to a further nine years' imprisonment, and again, convicted and sentenced on 4 August 2023 to a total of 19 years, on charges including financing and inciting "extremism" and "rehabilitating the Nazi ideology."

On 1 December 2023, authorities brought new charges against Aleksei Navalny, this time under Part 2 of Article 214 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation ("vandalism motivated by hatred or committed by a group of persons").

Aleksei Navalny has been constantly targeted for harsher treatment in every penal institution where he was placed since his arrest. He served his term in a strict regime (maximum security) penal colony IK-6 in Vladimir Oblast (240 km east of Moscow) but was ordered to be moved to a "special regime" prison colony (which is an even harsher prison regime than at his current colony) under the terms of his latest sentence, unless it is overturned on appeal.

While in prison, Aleksei Navalny has been repeatedly placed in punishment cells for purported violations of prison discipline, including 23 times in the so-called SHIZO (penalty isolation cell) where he was not allowed any visits or letters, exercise or walks outside, or a chance to buy additional food in the prison shop.

Prolonged solitary confinement is defined by the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners as period of 15 days or more in conditions lacking meaningful human contact for at least 22 hours a day. Prolonged solitary confinement constitutes a violation of the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The legal limit in Russia of the single period for which a prisoner can be placed in SHIZO at a time is 15 days, but by 27 September 2023 Aleksei Navalny had already spent 12 months in a so-called single-type penal confinement cell (EPKT), which is the most severe and lengthy form of disciplinary punishment for a prisoner, reserved for "systematic offenders" of prison discipline. It is not known if during this time he may have been sharing the cell with other prisoners.

On 12 December 2023, it became apparent that Aleksei Navalny was no longer officially listed in the penal colony IK-6. The Russian authorities have refused to provide any information about the fate and whereabouts of Aleksei Navalny since his lawyers last heard of him on 5 December. While there is a possibility that he may be in transit to another prison colony, the authorities have an obligation to make the information about all prisoner transfers promptly available. Amnesty International [has previously documented](#) the cruel and inhuman practices used by Russian authorities during prisoner transfers. Prisoner transfers in Russia can last weeks without any information provided to the prisoner's relatives. The transfers nearly always put inmates' health and well-being at risk as they are exposed to mistreatment and harassment.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Russian and English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 1 February 2023

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Aleksei Navalny (he/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/7309/2023/en/>