



1 February 2021

Senator the Hon. Marise Payne
Minister for Foreign Affairs
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Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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Dear Minister Payne

RE: ALEKSEI NAVALNY

I am writing to you concerning Russian politician and anti-corruption activist Aleksei Navalny who was arrested on 17 January 2021 after arriving from Germany at Sheremetyevo airport and remanded in custody for 30 days.

His arrest and detention are arbitrary and politically motivated. The grounds provided for his arrest was his alleged violation of his probation terms resulting from a past conviction that the European Court of Human Rights found in 2019 to be the result of politically motivated prosecution. The conviction required him to report regularly to a probation officer, which he could not do while he was receiving life-saving treatment abroad. Now the Russian authorities claim that his stay in Germany for treatment and recovery was a violation of probation terms.

Navalny is a prominent and vocal government critic. Like many others in Russia, he has been arbitrarily targeted and now deprived of his liberty for his peaceful political activism and for exercising his right to freedom of expression. Navalny himself has been arrested numerous times, including for calling for or participating in peaceful protest. He spent 10 months under house arrest in 2014, in addition to a total of several months under so-called "administrative arrest". **He is a prisoner of conscience and must be released immediately and unconditionally.**

As widely reported, Navalny fell seriously ill during a flight from Tomsk (Siberia) to Moscow. The aeroplane made an emergency landing in the city of Omsk, where Aleksei Navalny was hospitalized, in a state of coma. His diagnosis by Russian doctors was inconclusive. On 22 August, on his family's insistence and after a vigorous domestic and international campaign, Aleksei Navalny was discharged from the hospital, still in a coma, and transferred for treatment to Berlin, Germany. Vladimir Putin subsequently claimed that he had personally intervened to authorise his transfer. Aleksei Navalny gradually recovered in Germany and was discharged from the hospital in late September to continue his rehabilitation.

Experts in Germany and several other countries concluded that Aleksei Navalny had been poisoned with the nerve agent Novichok, considered a chemical weapon by the Organization for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. In spite of this and of Aleksei Navalny's representatives' relentless attempts to have a criminal investigation into his alleged poisoning opened, the Russian authorities have consistently refused to do so.

On 13 January, Navalny announced that he would return to Moscow on 17 January despite the risk of being arrested. On 17 January, riot police arrested dozens of his supporters who were gathering at Moscow's Vnukovo airport to greet him. At the last minute, the flight was redirected to Sheremetyevo, where, as mentioned above, Navalny was arrested.

Amnesty International is also monitoring the peaceful protests that have been taking place. On 31 January, at least 4,000 peaceful protesters were detained in Moscow, Saint Petersburg and other Russian cities, during brutal dispersals of rallies demanding the release of Navalny. We are concerned by the unlawful use of force by police, including violent dispersals.

Navalny's arrest and detention is a blight on the Russian government. The world is watching this case and such, it warrants a global response.

I urge you to raise this matter with Russian authorities and the Russian Ambassador to Australia. **Aleksei Navalny must be released immediately and unconditionally.**

For further information, or to discuss and organise a meeting, please contact Joel MacKay at joel.mackay@amnesty.org.au or 0424 242 112.

Yours sincerely,



Sam Klintworth
National Director
Amnesty International Australia