

# [***Donald Trump again compares his criminal indictments to imprisonment and death of Putin's top rival***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BCN-5991-DYMD-60M5-00000-00&context=1516831)

The Associated Press

February 21, 2024 Wednesday 4:03 AM GMT

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**Section:** DOMESTIC NEWS; POLITICAL NEWS

**Length:** 686 words

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**Dateline:** GREENVILLE, S.C.

**Body**

GREENVILLE, S.C. — Donald Trump doubled down Tuesday on comparing his criminal indictments to the circumstances of Russian dissident [*Alexei Navalny*](https://apnews.com/article/russia-navalny-dead-opposition-leader-2d11644f7ae5332587b39150f1fd1738), the top political opponent of Russia’s autocratic leader Vladimir Putin who died in a remote arctic prison after being jailed by the Kremlin leader.

Appearing on a Fox News Channel town hall pre-taped before a live audience in Greenville, South Carolina, Trump bemoaned Navalny’s death, which President Joe Biden and other Western leaders have blamed on Putin. Trump then pivoted to himself, repeating his assertions that the prosecutions against him are driven by ***politics*** despite no evidence that Biden or the White House ordered them.

“Navalny is a very sad situation and he’s very brave, he was a very brave guy,” Trump said in response to a question from Fox News Channel's Laura Ingraham. “He went back, he could have stayed away, and frankly probably would have been a lot better off staying away and talking from outside of the country as opposed to having to go back in, because people thought that could happen, and it did happen.

“And it’s a horrible thing, but it’s happening in our country, too,” Trump continued, suggesting his criminal indictments — which include two cases stemming from his efforts to overturn his 2020 defeat — are proof that the U.S. is “turning into a communist country in many ways.”

“I got indicted four times ... all because of the fact that I’m in ***politics***,” Trump said. “They indicted me on things that are so ridiculous.”

He extended the comparison to his loss in a civil fraud trial last week, in which a New York judge [*ordered Trump*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-civil-fraud-verdict-engoron-244024861f0df886543c157c9fc5b3e4) to pay $355 million in penalties after finding he lied about his wealth for years. With interest, Trump owes the state about $454 million.

“It is a form of Navalny," Trump said. "It is a form of communism, of fascism.”

He did not give a clear answer when asked whether he would post a bond covering the judgment, which is one way he’d be able to avoid having to pay the full amount while he appeals.

Trump made no mention of Putin, part of his longstanding pattern of [*refusing to denounce and often complimenting the Russian leader*](https://apnews.com/article/russia-putin-biden-trump-fb2fece0be7685624a3e3e379a8a3bd3) going back to when he was in the White House. But his remarks come as House Republicans have refused to provide more funding to Ukraine in its defense against Russia's invasion and as many in the Republican Party [*grow more accepting*](https://apnews.com/article/putin-russia-republicans-ukraine-europe-trump-fbe56b789e7c37313ec158a00a571be4) of Russian expansionism.

Putin [*recently suggested he preferred Biden*](https://apnews.com/article/russia-putin-biden-trump-fb2fece0be7685624a3e3e379a8a3bd3) in the White House to Trump. U.S. intelligence assessments of both the 2016 and 2020 elections found that Russia was behind influence operations to boost Trump at the expense of his Democratic Party opponents.

Ingraham interrupted Trump at the town hall Tuesday to ask whether he believed he could become a “potential political prisoner” for the rest of his life like Navalny. Trump sidestepped the question.

“If I were losing in the polls, they wouldn’t even be talking about me and I wouldn’t have had any legal fees,” he answered. “If I were out, I think — although they hate me so much, I think if I got out they’d still, ‘let’s pursue this guy, we can’t stand this guy.’”

The Fox town hall, recorded Tuesday afternoon and broadcast during Ingraham's primetime hour on the network, marked Trump's first extended remarks about Navalny since Russian officials announced his death. The town hall came four days before Trump competes against Nikki Haley in South Carolina's Republican presidential primary.

Ingraham began the discussion by offering Trump, who has praised Putin for years as a strong leader, a chance to clarify his only [*previous public reference*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-navalny-putin-russia-biden-efa2bf5ee43c989820f3e02e90c5ebe9) to Navalny's demise. In a social media post 72 hours after Russian officials confirmed Navalny had died, Trump broke his silence without mentioning Putin or Navalny's family.

“The sudden death of Alexei Navalny has made me more and more aware of what is happening in our Country,” he wrote before blasting “CROOKED, Radical Left Politicians, Prosecutors, and Judges leading us down a path to destruction” and repeating his false claims that U.S. elections are riddled with fraud.

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Cooper reported from Phoenix.

**Load-Date:** February 21, 2024

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