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In a First, Duma Deputy Resigns

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In a first in State Duma history, a lawmaker has filed a resignation letter, citing unspecified "family circumstances," Interfax reported Tuesday.

Valery Kornilov, 46, a member of the ruling United Russia party, refused to elaborate on the circumstances of his decision in his letter to Duma Speaker Boris Gryzlov or in talks with colleagues, the report said. An unidentified Kornilov aide told Interfax that he also was unaware of the reasons for his boss to quit.

The move puzzled fellow lawmakers, with Sergei Ivanov of the Liberal Democratic Party demanding a more thorough explanation.

"Was he tortured, beaten? The cause is completely unclear," Ivanov said at a Duma hearing.

But the resignation was nevertheless approved by the legislature, with Alexander Gurov, a member of the Duma's Credentials and Ethics Commission, pointing out that the Constitution allows a deputy to resign voluntarily.

Kornilov, a Nizhny Novgorod native and a former GAZ employee, is married and has two

daughters, Gzt.ru reported.

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