

Pirate Party Refused Registration Over Name

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In a bizarre twist, the Justice Ministry has failed to distinguish between sea rovers and copyright infringers by refusing to register the Russian version of the Pirate [Party](#), a global movement with seats in the European Parliament.

A party with this name cannot be registered because "current legislation defines piracy as an attack on a sea or river craft, which is a criminal offense," the ministry said in a statement carried on the party's web site.

The organization's title implies that its members are criminals serving jail time, which is a violation of party legislation, the ministry added.

The Pirate Party — which advocates change of copyright and patent legislation, not armed robbery on the high seas — filed an appeal with a Moscow district court on Monday.

The ministry's attempt to label the party's 15,000 card-carrying members as criminals is insulting, leader Pavel Rassudov told The Moscow Times.

It also serves as a jab at dozens of "pirate parties" worldwide, including in the European Parliament, where the Swedish party, which was the first to start the movement for free information access, won two seats in 2009 elections.

"According to the Justice Ministry's logic, European lawmakers are criminals, too," Rassudov said in a telephone interview. There are at least 41 pirate parties in the world, he said.

The Justice Ministry could not be reached to comment Monday. Current legislation requires a party to have a minimum of 45,000 supporters to be registered, but they do not have to be registered members.

The real reason behind the refusal might have been reluctance by the government to let new players into the field ahead of the State Duma elections in December, Rassudov said.

"Maybe they don't like the idea that we could gain popularity, because about 40 percent of voters are Internet users," he said, adding that the party considers all web surfers their target constituency.

Pro-Kremlin United Russia earlier this month won the last big regional vote before the Duma elections, but less convincingly than in previous years.

No new party has been registered in Russia since 2009. Separate requests by prominent opposition politicians Eduard Limonov and Sergei Udaltsov, as well as a group of four liberal leaders including Boris Nemtsov, were all thrown out by the Justice Ministry on technicalities.

The Pirate Party has mostly stayed away from the political mainstream, but it scored a hit with voters when it recently started Russia's answer to WikiLeaks, RuLeaks.net, which released the first photographs of a luxury Black Sea mansion linked to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

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