

EU Parliament for Free Vote

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STRASBOURG, France — The European Parliament called on Russia on Thursday to guarantee free elections and lift curbs on the opposition Party of People's Freedom in a resolution that Moscow condemned as "crude" interference in its affairs.

A resolution passed with a clear majority by the parliament in Strasbourg reiterated concerns about difficulties faced by parties in registering ahead of the December parliamentary vote, saying the restrictions were obstacles to political plurality.

It said the parliament "deplores" the decision to deny the Party of People's Freedom registration and called on the authorities to scrap rules against the principle of free elections.

Difficulties faced by parties in gaining access to elections "effectively constrain political competition in Russia, reduce the choice available to its electorate, and show that there are still real obstacles to political pluralism in the country," it said.

The Foreign Ministry, which has said criticism of the decision to deny the registration was "inappropriate and unfounded," sharply criticized the resolution.

"It is not news to me that the European Parliament once again is trying in such a crude manner to interfere in internal legislation," Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said.

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