

Opposition Urges Duma Election Boycott

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Opposition leaders urged voters Wednesday to boycott December's parliamentary elections, saying "only civil disobedience will return power to the people."

Garry Kasparov, a former world chess champion, denounced President Dmitry Medvedev's announcement in late September that he would not run for a second term so that Prime Minister Vladimir Putin could reclaim the presidency.

"We were told that there are no voters in the country anymore, and all the questions are answered behind the scenes," Kasparov said. "We are only told the final result."

He and other opposition figures issued a statement calling the Dec. 4 elections "shameful" and "illegitimate." The statement said that "only a mass protest against fictitious electoral procedures — only civil disobedience — will return power to the people."

Sergei Udaltsov, leader of Left Front, stressed the importance of a boycott as mass action. "Our goal is to give it a formalized and organized appearance and actually take people out to the streets in the first place," he said.

Kasparov said the Dec. 4 boycott would be the first of many planned protests. "We won't solve our problems in one day," he said. "This is a difficult and long fight."

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