The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Puts Off Call-In Show Until After Vote

By Alexander Winning

November 21, 2011



Prime Minister Vladimir Putin will hold his annual live televised call-in show before the end of the year, but only after the Dec. 4 State Duma elections are held, his spokesman said Monday.

"Communication with the Russian people will take place in December in the traditional format. The head of the government will answer citizens' questions from the studio. Live transmission from a range of Russian regions is expected," Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Interfax.

This year's call-in will be Putin's 10th since December 2001, when he pioneered the format in the second year of his first presidential term. It has since become his preferred means of fielding questions and addressing the nation at the close of the calendar year.

Past call-ins have been memorable for scathing remarks against Putin's enemies. In 2010,

opposition leaders Boris Nemtsov and Mikhail Kasyanov were accused of "looting in the 1990s," and former Yukos CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky was criticized with the phrase "a thief should sit in jail."

While the show's format has changed little, the number of questions taken and time allotted to answering them has steadily grown. Last year, Putin set a record by responding to 60 questions in 4 hours, 26 minutes — beating his 2009 performance by 25 minutes.

This will be only the second time that the annual call-in has coincided with Putin running as a candidate in national elections — the last time being in 2007, when the show preceded the Duma vote and Putin headed United Russia's party list.

Peskov promised on Monday that the 2011 call-in would not take the form of pre-election campaigning.

Meanwhile, Duma Speaker Boris Gryzlov announced Monday that President Dmitry Medvedev will not address the Federal Assembly before the parliamentary vote.

Instead, Medvedev will likely hold the address at the end of December when the new Duma has been formed, Vedomosti reported.

Analysts have speculated that the decision to delay the tandem's public appearances is linked to fears that poor performances could strengthen United Russia's ratings slide, which has gathered momentum in recent months.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/11/21/putin-puts-off-call-in-show-until-after-vote-a10904