

Pro-Putin March Plan For Feb. 23

February 09, 2012



Actors dressed as hamsters holding signs bearing opposition slogans pose Thursday with a live bear for a pro-Putin videoshoot in Moscow. Authorities scoff at the opposition as “network hamsters” who spend all their time blogging, but activists have embraced it as a term of endearment. **Mikhail Voskresensky**

Supporters of presidential candidate Vladimir Putin plan to hold a march Feb. 23 and expect that 200,000 people will come — including even the prime minister himself, officials with his campaign said Thursday.

Campaign manager Sergei Govorukhin said the march, if approved by City Hall, will take place on Tverskaya Ulitsa in central Moscow, with a rally afterward on Manezh Square next to the Kremlin, Interfax reported.

“Taking into account the situation that developed at Poklonnaya Gora, we decided to increase the declared number of [allowed] participants to 200,000,” Govorukhin said, referring to the pro-Putin rally held Saturday that police said drew about 140,000 demonstrators.

Independent estimates put the number at Poklonnaya Gora lower, with some observers claiming that the actual turnout was just 25,000 participants. Putin campaign official Alexei Anisimov said Putin would be invited to attend.

“Of course, we will ask our candidate to take part, but he will have to make the decision personally,” Anisimov told Interfax.

Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the prime minister would consider attending.

“It is possible that Putin will take part,” he said, according to Interfax.

Organizers said the march will include various groups that make up the pro-Putin All-Russia People’s Front movement.

“We will offer the main slogan as ‘Defend your homeland,’” Anisimov said.

Opposition groups held a series of protests following the controversial State Duma elections on Dec. 4, a pro-Kremlin rally was held on Manezh Square on Dec. 12.

Opposition protesters had asked City Hall to approve a march route for their Feb. 4 march that would end on Manezh Square, but were refused. The march instead ended at Bolotnaya Ploshchad.

Opposition protesters plan to gather on the Garden Ring Road on Feb. 26 and join hands in an unbroken circle, organizers said Thursday. They expect 34,000 people to participate.

Original url: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/02/09/pro-putin-march-plan-for-feb-23-a12505>