

City Hall Rejects Opposition Request for Rally at Lubyanka on March 5

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The Moscow mayor's office has refused permission for an opposition rally on March 5 at Lubyanskaya Ploshchad, offering less-central sites as alternatives, Left Front leader Sergei Udaltsov wrote Friday on Twitter.

The opposition's bid to hold a demonstration at Lubyanskaya Ploshchad, outside the Federal Security Service building in central Moscow, became the subject of controversy earlier this week when a pro-Kremlin youth group managed to put in their application for an event at the same location before opposition activists.

The conflict between the two parties ended in a physical confrontation at the mayor's office in which parliamentarian Ilya Ponomaryov of the A Just Russia party was threatened by police and had his shoe torn. He later gave the shoe to Udaltsov to show President Dmitry Medvedev, who quipped that Ponomaryov should be compensated for the damage.

Udaltsov wrote Friday on Twitter that the alternatives for the rally on March 5 offered by City Hall, which included Bolotnaya Ploshchad, Taras Shevchenko Naberezhnaya, and Poklonnaya Gora, were unacceptable.

After successfully negotiating sites for three large-scale rallies with the city since December, opposition organizers have now had their last two applications rejected — for the event planned on March 5 and for an event on Sunday at Ploshchad Revolyutsii, which the city said will be occupied by Maslenitsa festivities. Radical group Left Front has called on demonstrators to take to Ploshchad Revolyutsii near the Kremlin on Sunday for an unsanctioned gathering.

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