

Parnas Registration Blocked Once Again

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As a presidential bill easing restrictions on registering political parties passed a key second reading in the State Duma on Tuesday, a Moscow court upheld a decision barring liberal opposition party Parnas from participating in elections.

The Moscow City Court upheld the August ruling in Zamoskvoretsky District Court, which rejected an appeal by Parnas leaders over the Justice Ministry's denial to register the party, Interfax reported.

Party co-founder Mikhail Kasyanov, a former prime minister, [told](#) Kommersant FM radio that Parnas leaders had been "absolutely prepared" to be denied again because "authorities are afraid of exactly the fact that democrats will unite."

The party's lawyer, Vadim Prokhorov told Interfax that the group's leaders will appeal the ruling to the Presidium of the Moscow City Court and after that to the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg if necessary.

Prokhorov said earlier that the registration denial violated the European Convention on Human Rights, which allows for restricting party activities only when they undermine national security, public order, health or infringe upon the rights of other citizens.

The People's Freedom Party, or Parnas, was founded in December 2010 by leading political figures from the 1990s: Kasyanov, former Duma deputy Vladimir Ryzhkov, and former senior government officials Boris Nemtsov and Vladimir Milov.

The Justice Ministry [denied](#) Parnas' registration in June over what it said were contradictions between the party's founding charter and federal laws regulating the activities of political parties and nongovernmental organizations.

The violations included the absence of a planned rotation of the party's federal and regional leaders and the inclusion of minors and deceased people in party lists, among others, according to a copy of the ministry's letter posted on the party's website.

Kasyanov said the bill considered by the Duma on Tuesday — which would reduce the minimum required national party membership from 40,000 to 500 — would make "no difference" to Parnas because authorities had denied registration even when lower membership numbers were required.

The third and final reading of the bill will be held before the weekend, after which the bill may be considered and approved in the Federation Council by next Wednesday, senior Duma Deputy Alexei Ostrovsky said late last week.

The bill will then be signed by Medvedev and take effect after its official publication in the government newspaper Rossiiskaya Gazeta.

The bill's first draft that was sent to the Duma late last year envisaged its enactment in 2013, but lawmakers approved amendments by unregistered parties who had asked it be put into effect earlier, so they could take part in regional and local elections in the fall, Ekho Moskvyy [reported](#) Tuesday.

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