

Rights Council Members Say They Won't Work Under Putin

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Dmitry Oreshkin

Political commentator Dmitry Oreshkin and activist Svetlana Gannushkina said they will not continue as members of the president's human rights council following Vladimir Putin's inauguration because they believe Putin's victory was not legitimate.

Their announcements, reported Wednesday by Vedomosti, came after Yelena Panfilova, the head of Transparency International's Russia office, said during a meeting of the council Saturday that she would not join the next council because she would be "able to do more" with her "civic activism."

Oreshkin told the newspaper that he did not consider Putin a legitimate president because of alleged fraud in the March 4 vote and said he could not work on his council.

He said a presentation on electoral fraud that he had planned to give during a council meeting had been axed by the presidential administration. The official reason for its exclusion from the agenda was that President Dmitry Medvedev had a tight schedule.

Gannushkina, head of refugee aid organization Civil Assistance, said she too would not join the next council because of her belief that the election was unfair.

Veteran human rights campaigner Lyudmila Alexeyeva said she would continue her work in the group, while 10 others had not yet made up their minds regarding their future participation in the council, one member told Vedomosti.

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