

Nashi Founder Yakemenko Leaves Youth Affairs Post

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Vasily Yakemenko **Igor Tabakov**

Vasily Yakemenko, the notorious founding father of the pro-Kremlin Nashi youth movement, has officially stepped down from his post as the head of the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev removed Yakemenko from the job at Yakemenko's request, according to an order posted Wednesday on the government's website.

The decision was expected, since Yakemenko, 41, had announced that he would step down from his post to concentrate on leading a political party he has created with the Kremlin's blessing.

In an interview with The Moscow Times, Yakemenko indicated that his departure marks the end of an era for Nashi, which he founded in 2001 and is known for its hounding of opposition leaders.

"The Nashi project is finished, and I can say that with pleasure," Yakemenko said, admitting

that the project "started to make serious mistakes" soon after he formally stepped down as head of the organization in 2007.

Yakemenko created Nashi in 2005 as a Kremlin response to youth organizations in Serbia and Georgia that took an active role in Western-backed anti-authoritarian revolutions.

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