

Celebrity Trio Advanced for Human Rights Council

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Izvestia reported that Yury Shevchuk, lead singer of rock group DDT, was one of the candidates for membership in the human rights council

A secret vote by the Kremlin human rights council has resulted in a trio of famous candidates for membership in the body, including a rock singer, the "purse" of the opposition movement, and a celebrity television journalist, Izvestia reported Monday.

DDT frontman Yury Shevchuk, prominent opposition organizer Olga Romanova, and New York-raised journalist Vladimir Pozner have been tapped for potential membership in the council, the paper said, citing a participant of the voting process.

"I have asked council members to say who they would like to see in the council," council head Mikhail Fedotov told Izvestia.

Fedotov refused to confirm the news. "You'll know all the names when the decree is signed by the president," he said, adding that more than a quarter of the body's members would be replaced.

The purported candidates seemed to have no idea they had been chosen as candidates. Shevchuk told Izvestia that "no such offer had been made" to him personally.

The musician said the offer was too serious to answer immediately. "I need to think. And right now I'm on tour, sorry," he said.

Pozner told the Russian News Service that no one had spoken about it with him, nor had he received any offers.

Romanova, a protest organizer who has managed funds for opposition events, criticized the decision on Facebook. "Rights are not given by the Kremlin. Rights are taken on the streets," she wrote.

At least one other candidate has turned down an offer to join the council. Alexander Cherkasov, member of human rights group Memorial, declined, saying he believes that "cooperation with the authorities is necessary, but only if it brings results and the government is ready to listen to advice."

Fedotov will meet with each of the candidates before submitting the list to the president next week.

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