

St. Pete Administration Wants to Ban Protests in City Center

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The St. Petersburg legislative assembly, where the bill will be heard

St. Petersburg officials are seeking to clamp down on protest activity by backing a new bill outlawing public events in the city center.

According to the bill, introduced by the city administration for consideration by the United Russia-controlled legislature, rallies would be banned on 11 of St. Petersburg's main squares.

Several parks and central roads, including main thoroughfare Nevsky Prospekt, would also be off-limits for demonstrators, as would areas adjacent to government institutions.

The bill would be a major blow to the local opposition, which has repeatedly held rallies and Occupy-style gatherings on squares and streets blacklisted in the draft legislation.

If the bill passes in its current form, protesters would be subject to the elevated fines stipulated in the new protest law signed by President Vladimir Putin on June 8. The law raised penalties to 300,000 rubles (\$9,275) for participants and 1 million rubles for organizers

of unauthorized or illegal protests.

City authorities introduced the ban "with the aim of defending the rights and freedoms of citizens," according to a copy of the bill posted on the city legislature's [website](#).

Even some Kremlin-friendly United Russia deputies were confused by the bill, set to be reviewed by the city legislature in the fall, calling it "excessive," according to Kommersant.

"I hope that they [St. Petersburg deputies] are ready for discussion and that by fall this list [of banned protest sites] will change at least 10 times," United Russia Deputy Konstantin Serov told the business daily.

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