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# Alexeyeva Asks City to Sanction Birthday Party

By The Moscow Times

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Lyudmila Alexeyeva **Igor Podgorny**

Veteran human rights defender Lyudmila Alexeyeva will ask the city to give permission to hold her birthday party next month, saying she doesn't want the festivities to run awry of a strict new law on public demonstrations.

"I've lived to 85. I have something to celebrate. I'm going to celebrate indoors; people might come in groups, and I want everything to be absolutely legal," she said, Interfax reported.

Alexeyeva, who heads the Moscow Helsinki Group, Russia's oldest human rights organization, called on police to ensure safe passage to the cafe where she'll be celebrating her birthday with 200 invited guests and other well-wishers on July 20.

Alexeyeva has railed against a bill signed into law earlier this month by President Vladimir Putin that dramatically increases fines for illegal demonstrations, ostensibly in response

to violent clashes at an opposition rally in May.

Opponents have said the bill is designed to stifle the opposition, and a wide range of civil activists, from Alexeyeva, the matriarch of Russia's human rights community, to former Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin, have criticized the law as draconian.

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