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Medvedev Says He May Run for 2nd Kremlin Term

By Alexander Winning

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Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev at a meeting with young students earlier this month. **Andrei Makhonin**

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said in an interview published Monday that he wants to stay in politics for the long term and that he hopes to run for a second term as president.

Medvedev, currently leading Russia's official delegation at the London Olympics, made the comments to Britain's The Times newspaper in a far-ranging interview, which touched on domestic politics, foreign policy and the Olympics itself.

"I'm still a young man. I've not ruled out running [for president] again if people are interested," said Medvedev, 46. "If they are tired of me, I'll say goodbye and start writing my memoirs."

Answering questions on domestic policy, Medvedev rushed to the defense of legislation recently signed into law by his mentor, President Vladimir Putin, including laws toughening

penalties for violating rally rules and labeling politically active nongovernmental organizations that receive overseas funding as "foreign agents."

Medvedev also said corruption remained a "systemic threat" to Russia, but said he was proud to have made the fight against graft a matter for public discussion.

In other comments, the prime minister acknowledged that the three Pussy Riot band members in custody since March for an anti-Putin performance in Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral had been through "an ordeal," but said they would have been more harshly punished in other countries.

Touching on the Syrian conflict, Medvedev suggested that Moscow is losing patience with President Bashar Assad, adding that averting a full-blown civil war was the main aim of Russia's Syria policy.

"The positions of Russia, the United States and Britain are not as sharply different as sometimes suggested. We all start from the position that the worst outcome would be a full civil war in Syria," Medvedev said, adding that Moscow would back any effective plan to end the violence excluding "imposing democracy" from outside.

On a lighter note, Medvedev, who witnessed the opening of the games from a VIP stand in London's Olympic Stadium on Friday evening, described the ceremony as "an exceptional spectacle" and "unforgettable."

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