

Justice Ministry Registers Opposition Parnas Party

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Vladimir Ryzhkov, a co-leader of the Parnas party and a former State Duma deputy. **Sergei Porter**

Opposition leaders started drawing plans to participate in fall regional elections after the Justice Ministry registered their RPR-Parnas party Thursday.

RPR-Parnas is a merger of the Republican Party of Russia, led by former State Duma Deputy Vladimir Ryzhkov, and the Party of People's Freedom, or Parnas, which he co-founded together with former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov, former Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov and former Deputy Energy Minister Vladimir Milov.

Milov later left the party after disagreements with his allies.

Ryzhkov's Republican Party was disbanded by the Justice Ministry in 2007, but the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the decision was unlawful last year.

Ryzhkov said Thursday that his party was reregistered as the merger following the Strasbourg

court's ruling, Interfax reported.

Ilya Yashin, a senior official in the new party and a prominent member of the anti-Kremlin protest movement, said little time remained to start campaigning for legislative elections in October, but the party was considering fielding candidates in the Altai and Saratov regions and the city of Vladivostok.

Yashin said participation in gubernatorial elections would be next to impossible because of the barriers raised by new legislation that restored gubernatorial elections.

"Gubernatorial elections are interesting, but the problem is that the filters are impossible to overcome," Yashin said by phone, referring to "filters" that require candidates to get support from 5 to 10 percent of local lawmakers and approval from the Kremlin.

Despite the presence of political heavyweights in the new party, RPR-Parnas has slim chances of winning support on the regional level, said Alexei Makarkin, an analyst with the Center for Political Technologies. "They are known in Moscow, but their names don't ring a bell in the regions," he said. "They will only be able to succeed if they can get recognizable faces on the ground."

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