

Opposition Proposes NTV Advertising Boycott

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Opposition and human rights groups on Monday urged Western consumer products giants to stop "financing politically motivated persecution" by advertising on a Kremlin-friendly TV network known for its biased coverage of government critics and demonstrations against President Vladimir Putin.

In the wake of unprecedented anti-Putin protests that followed last December's rigged parliament vote and Putin's return to the Kremlin in May, NTV has run dozens of news reports, talk shows and pseudo-documentaries accusing opposition leaders of plotting coups and terrorist attacks, of receiving money from Western governments, and of hiring migrant workers and neo-Nazis to participate in anti-Putin rallies.

The White Ribbon movement, the Moscow Civil Forum and the For Human Rights group said in an open letter Monday that the broadcaster has become part of the Kremlin's "machinery for repression."

In a statement directed at companies such as Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble, Nestle, and L'Oreal, the three groups said: "Please consider stopping to place your company's advertising on the NTV channel because it is a way of financing politically motivated persecution."

Coca-Cola's Russian office declined to provide contact information for its spokespeople, and a P&G spokeswoman said she needed a written request. The public relations offices of L'Oreal International and Nestle were not immediately available for comment.

NTV reports have prompted several official investigations of opposition leaders and triggered at least two arrests. One of the arrested opposition activists, Leonid Razvozzhayev, claimed Russian prosecutors kidnapped him from neighboring Ukraine and tortured him for several days, forcing him to confess in anti-government activities.

NTV coverage also has triggered rallies at the company's Moscow headquarters, as well as tens of thousands of angry tweets and comments on social networking websites. "Shame on NTV" has become a popular protest slogan, and many Kremlin critics refuse to be interviewed by the channel's journalists.

NTV was once the shining star of independent Russian television, but after Putin came to power in 2000 he orchestrated its takeover by the state-controlled gas giant Gazprom. In recent months, it has been NTV, not the two state television networks, that has broadcast some of the nastiest attacks on the opposition.

In early October, NTV released "Anatomy of a Protest 2," a documentary that showed alleged hidden camera footage suggesting that Left Front leader Sergei Udaltsov met with representatives of an exiled Russian banker to discuss raising \$200 million for anti-Putin protests.

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