The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

City Approves London-Like Speakers' Corners

By Yekaterina Kravtsova

December 25, 2012



City Hall on Wednesday designated two places in Moscow as rally sites that do not require preliminary approval from authorities.

Rallies may be held in local equivalents of the Speakers' Corner in London's Hyde Park, where unauthorized public speaking on any subject is allowed.

The bill requires organizers to inform the authorities about the intention to conduct a public event at least three days before it takes place, Vasily Oleinik, a deputy head of the regional security department, said in comments carried by Interfax.

Two venues were chosen by the authorities for the speakers' corners, which are expected to open at the beginning of next year. The one at Gorky Park will be designed for 2,000 participants, and the one in Sokolniki will be intended for 2,500 people.

The Communist Party, however, opposed the introduction of speakers' corners, saying it could deprive people of their constitutional rights, as the bill may lead to a ban on rallies elsewhere. Critics have said restrictions on protests passed by parliament earlier this year essentially abolish the freedom of assembly.

"The bill doesn't imply any additional restrictions on organizing rallies in Moscow," said Alexei Mayorov, head of the regional safety department.

Opposition leader Sergei Udaltsov said his attitude toward the bill was generally positive. "It will allow [people] to gather and express their opinion on political, economic and social issues without any permissions or bureaucratic procedures," he said, adding that the opposition would soon try out the new venues.

But Eduard Limonov, leader of the unregistered Other Russia party, said the opposition was not going to hold protests in Hyde Park equivalents.

"Of course we won't go there, nor will the majority of political organizations. Pride will prevail," he said.

Meanwhile, authorization will be needed for a series of one-person pickets united by one purpose. The bill also defined the allowed space between participants of such pickets as 50 meters.

Related articles:

- Where the Opposition Stands One Year On
- How to Democratize Russia Without Revolution
- Taunting and Laughter Fill Opposition Rally

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/12/25/city-approves-london-like-speakers-corners-a20473