

White Ribbon 'Ban' Rouses Fury

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A white ribbon being displayed atop an activist's vehicle during an automobile rally last year on the Garden Ring. **Igor Tabakov**

Hours after a senior city official on Tuesday hinted at a ban on wearing white ribbons, hundreds of protest movement supporters pledged on Facebook to don the anti-Kremlin symbol with pride.

In a national television interview aired Sunday, the head of the city's culture department, Sergei Kapkov, appeared to say that a new law had forbidden Muscovites from wearing the ribbons.

"Because the political temperature is so high, and the public discourse is not always healthy, a ribbon can be interpreted as a provocation when you are using public transportation," Kapkov [told TV host Vladimir Pozner](#), referring to a December law that tightens restrictions on public rallies.

The backlash among Internet-savvy activists was swift, with Tuesday declared "White Ribbon

Day," and more than 700 Facebook users pledging to wear the protest symbol in spite of the would-be ban.

But the reaction turned out to reflect a tense political climate, rather than legal reality, according to a spokeswoman for the culture department, who said Kapkov was referring to a ban on automobile rallies.

Long-time City Duma Speaker Vladimir Platonov confirmed on his [Ekho Moskvyy blog](#) Tuesday that "the Moscow City Duma has not passed any laws banning gatherings of more than one person within the Garden Ring, or driving with white ribbons."

The December law bans automobile rallies on or within the Garden Ring, creates designated demonstration spots in the Gorky and Sokolniki parks and forbids individual picketers from standing less than 50 meters apart.

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