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Communists Get 115K Signatures for Anti-Graft Convention

By The Moscow Times

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A traffic cop writing a ticket. The legislation would oppose illicit earnings. **Igor Tabakov**

The Communist Party has submitted to the State Duma more than 115,000 signatures in favor of ratifying the United Nations Convention Against Corruption's Article 20, against "illicit enrichment," RIA-Novosti reported Wednesday.

Party leader Gennady Zyuganov told reporters that the initiative came from a group of young college students who gathered signatures online. Earlier, President Vladimir Putin said initiatives bearing more than 100,000 signatures would need to be considered by the parliament.

Article 20 introduces the term “illicit enrichment,” and if it is ratified, many officials will have to explain sizable bank accounts, expensive cars and real estate. If those officials were unable to present any sensible explanation, they would be subject to criminal liability.

"The government, back in 2008 following the economic crisis, said it would fight hard against corruption, but only one criminal case of large-scale theft in the Defense Ministry's system shows that this has not been done," Zyuganov said in comments carried by Interfax.

He said that if the funds were put toward developing sports infrastructure and other needed buildings, we could have "300 kindergartens, 100 sports centers, 50 swimming pools, 30 ice-skating rinks and at least 100 stadiums."

The Duma ratified the UN Convention Against Corruption in 2006, but failed to follow through with ratifying Article 20 and several subsections, Interfax reported.

"Russian officials fear this article like the devil fears holy water," Zyuganov said, because it requires them to declare their property and "report on the respective income for the material and financial resources that they have."

Article 20 says "each state party shall consider adopting such legislative and other measures as may be necessary to establish as a criminal offense, when committed intentionally, illicit enrichment, that is, a significant increase in the assets of a public official that he or she cannot reasonably explain in relation to his or her lawful income."

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