

After Boston, Putin Faces Questions About U.S. Visas on Call-In Show

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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President Vladimir Putin's televised call-in show this week will likely feature many questions about the possibility of U.S. visa restrictions in the wake of the Boston bombings and the reasons behind an apparent crackdown on Kremlin critics.

Those are among the 28 most frequently asked questions that have been submitted by telephone and e-mail ahead of the call-in show on Thursday, according to the [website](#) for the show.

The nature of the questions, which are pre-screened and pre-selected, suggest that this year's annual show might contain more bite than previous shows, which were carefully orchestrated.

This week's

show is sure to
be more hard
hitting than
previous ones,
with questions
about Pussy
Riot, Alexei
Navalny and
U.S. visas.

One burning question for Russians is whether U.S. visas will be restricted after two ethnic Chechen brothers were implicated in the April 15 bombings at the Boston Marathon that killed three people and injured more than 180.

The bombing suspects had lived in the U.S. for about decade, and one of them had received U.S. citizenship last fall.

The U.S. has not said what impact the bombings might have on its visa policy.

But Putin has made visa-free travel with the U.S. and European countries a priority during his time in office.

After two years of negotiations, the U.S. and Russia eased visa rules last fall to allow tourists, businesspeople and others to receive three-year, multi-entry visas. The new rules are the most liberal rules that Russia has with any Western nation.

Among the other questions that Russians want to raise on Thursday are concerns about the apparent crackdown on the opposition, including the Pussy Riot musicians and participants of an anti-Kremlin protest on Bolotnaya Ploshchad last May. They also want to condemn the "shameful trials" against late Hermitage lawyer Sergei Magnitsky and political opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

According to the show's website, the question "Since when is expressing your own position a crime?" has also been submitted frequently, as well as questions about how to make street protests more effective and requests for more information on nongovernmental organizations accused of receiving financing from abroad.

Russians also expressed discontent with what they say is a lack of independent courts and the failure of authorities to arrest former Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov and his aide Yevgenia Vasilyeva in an ongoing embezzlement investigation.

'Since when is
expressing your
own position a
crime?' was one
of the most
frequently
asked questions

listed.

Other issues that came up are bad roads; the growing gap between the rich and the poor, and whether this might lead to a "social explosion"; the "impossibility" for university graduates to find a job consistent with their education; small salaries and social allowances; the commercialization of education; the absence of support for small business; rising utility costs; and illegal migrants.

This year, a different procedure will be used to select citizens who will pose questions on the air. Instead of choosing whoever is present in a factory or on the street, they will be categorized by occupation, such as cultural figures, researchers, war veterans and students, Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Rossia 24 television on Monday.

Three national TV channels — Channel One, Rossia 1 and Rossia 24 — and the radio stations Mayak, Vesti FM and Radio Rossiya radio will offer a live broadcast of the show, which starts at noon.

In the past, the call-in shows have lasted three to four hours.

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