

Obama Schedules Talks With NGOs in St. Petersburg

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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U.S. President Barack Obama intends to meet with opposition-minded nongovernmental organizations during his visit to St. Petersburg for the G20 summit this week.

Among the people who have been invited to the meeting Thursday are Pavel Chikov, head of the human rights organization Agora; Lev Ponomaryov from For Human Rights; and Lyudmila Alexeyeva, head of the Moscow Helsinki Group, Interfax reported, citing the three activists.

The White House has not commented on the meeting.

The Kremlin said it was unaware of Obama's plans to meet with NGOs.

"While events like the G20 have official international programs, the leaders of various countries can make their own plans. As a president, Obama can do whatever he wishes,"

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in comments published Wednesday in Kommersant.

An unidentified Russian government official told Kommersant that Obama wanted the meeting to "show his citizens how much he cares for human rights around the world."

Many Russian NGOs have said that they have been unfairly targeted by prosecutors who are enforcing a law that came into force in November 2012 requiring foreign-funded politically active organizations to register as "foreign agents."

Activists say the wording of the law is vague and fear that the term "foreign agents" could see them accused of spying.

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