

Fearing Protests, Sobyenin Urges Navalny to Accept Defeat

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Incumbent Mayor Sergei Sobyenin was declared the winner of Moscow's weekend election on Monday, and he urged opposition candidate Alexei Navalny and his supporters to accept his narrow first-round victory.

With 100 percent of ballots counted, the United Russia party candidate collected 51.37 percent of the vote in Sunday's election, according to the Moscow elections committee.

His closet rival, opposition leader Alexei Navalny, won 27.24 percent, it said, adding that a second round would not be held because Sobyenin won more than 50 percent.

Sobyenin sought to stave off the specter of large street protests similar to those that Navalny led after disputed State Duma elections in December 2011 and propelled the opposition leader into the political spotlight.

"Muscovites do not need for the city to be turned into a political platform for a struggle for a revolution," Sobyenin told a meeting of supporters, according to Interfax.

"It is necessary to accept the views of the majority and to work together for the benefit of Moscow," he said. "It is important not to rock the boat and not to provoke people, because it seems to me that nothing could have been done to conduct a more fair election."

Navalny, however, was unlikely to heed Sobyenin's appeal, telling supporters early Monday that he was convinced that he had collected enough votes to force the election into a second round.

"We demand a second round," he said, describing preliminary results as "obvious fraud."

Sobyenin's election staff ascribed Navalny's success to poor overall voter turnout and active mobilization of opposition voters and alternative parties, an unidentified election campaigner close to Sobyenin's team told Interfax.

"Meanwhile, the acting mayor decided not to actively participate in the political campaign but to focus on the city's affairs," the campaigner said.

Separately, Sobyenin told journalists that he was willing to hold talks with Navalny. "It's very important that we don't divide the city into parts and set people against one another," he said.

Among the other candidates, Communist Party hopeful Ivan Melnikov placed third in the election with 10.69 percent of the vote, while Yabloko leader Sergei Mitrokhin got 3.51 percent, Mikhail Degtyarev of the Liberal Democratic Party got 2.86 percent and Nikolai Levichev of A Just Russia got 2.79 percent, according to the elections committee.

Turnout for the election was 32 percent.

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