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Protesters to Face Tougher Sentences for Repeated Public-Rally Violations

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The State Duma passed in a final reading Friday legislation that imposes prison sentences for repeated violations at public rallies.

People found guilty of public order violations at protests more than twice during a six-month period will now face up to five years in prison under the new law.

In the bill's earlier drafts, only protest organizers would have carried criminal responsibility for violations.

Under the new legislation, offenders can also be fined up to 1 million rubles ($29,000).

The new legislation follows harsher penalties introduced in 2012 for participating in unsanctioned rallies, raising the maximum fine for people found guilty of participating in illegal protests from about $70 to $9,000.

Russia has intensified its crackdown on protest activity since the reelection of President

Vladimir Putin in 2012. In May, Moscow's Levada Center, an independent research organization, found that a record high 85 percent of Russians would likely not take part in political protests.

See also:

5 People Detained in Moscow After Protesting a Bill on Unsanctioned Rallies

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