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Moscow Authorities Authorize Opposition Activists' March for Peace

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Workers cleaning up Tuesday in Donetsk, after months of fighting.

Opposition activists have been granted permission to stage a mass protest in Moscow's city center later this month, though city authorities vowed to punish anyone who acts out of line with the event's stated objectives, Interfax reported Thursday.

The All-Russian March for Peace on Sept. 21 will protest Russia's "irresponsible and aggressive policy" in light of the situation in Ukraine, which organizers claim has led to an "increase of fascist tendencies in the country, Russia's isolation in the world and grave economic consequences," according to the event's Facebook page.

But the city authorities claim that the formal application for the event had been worded more softly than on the Facebook page.

In their application, the organizers' official stated objective was to: "express and formulate

public opinion on human rights, legal and constitutional violations, as well as to express the need for Russia to comply with its international obligations and the norms of international law," Alexei Mayorov, the head of Moscow's regional security and anti-corruption department, said in comments carried by Lenta.ru.

If in fact there is such a divergence between the formal application and the public statement on Facebook, protesters could end up paying for the confusion.

"If someone [participating in the march] insists on slogans that do not meet its objectives and organizers fail to take measures [to control the situation], both could face administrative responsibility for violating the stated goals of the event," Mayorov warned.

As many as 50,000 demonstrators are permitted to march from Pushkin Square to Sakharov Avenue in central Moscow as part of the protest.

A request to hold a simultaneous peace march in Novosibirsk was rejected by the Siberian city's authorities, who justified the decision based on the organizers' improper submission of their application, Interfax reported Thursday.

A similar peace march was also held in Moscow ahead of the referendum on Crimea's secession from Ukraine in March. That event prompted a rival demonstration in support of the protection of Russian interests and the Russian-speaking population of eastern Ukraine.

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