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Moscow Authorities Take on Street Musicians

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Moscow authorities have announced a plan to regulate street musicians days after performers staged a protest against police harassment.

City officials plan to give performers permission to perform on certain streets and during certain hours only, news website Moskva 24 reported Monday.

"Alleys of musicians" are soon to appear in Moscow parks and streets, where musicians will be allowed to play on strictly defined spots and for a certain period of time.

"We proposed that musicians could be allowed to play in all the parks... Where they won't disturb local residents." Evgeny Babenko, chairman of the working group on the street performers and the head of the Arbat municipal district told Moskva 24. "Some boulevards, streets and embankments are good for this as well."

The working group is made up of Arbat region residents, musicians, artists and the

municipality authorities. The group has identified dozens of spots around the city that could be part of the musician program, Moskava 24 reported.

Babenko's region is known for the Arbat pedestrian street, which attracts numerous street performers hoping their craft will appeal to the many tourists who stroll the famous boulevard. The street itself will face changes under the new rules, which could restrict performances to weekends only, and only at particular locations.

One popular site for musicians — Tsoi's Wall, a tributed to Soviet rock legend Viktor Tsoi — is included in the list of proposed sites. Locals will have the chance to vote on the others.

The attempt to regulate street musicians comes after series of clashes between police and performers.

Earlier this month, street musicians took part in a protest against the harassment of street musicians by the police. Around 40 artists participated in the event, which involved standing on the Arbat with tape over their mouths, hands, instruments and collection boxes in a symbolic indication that authorities are "trying to shut their mouths."

"Police attack musicians, bring them to the police department, confiscate instruments and gives artists huge fines in amount of 10,000 rubles ($172) over 'unauthorized gathering' — that's what they call a crowd of listeners." Oleg Mokryakoff, a street musician posted on the protest facebook page.

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