

# Russian Opposition Deputy Sues Pro-Kremlin TV for Libel

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NTV declined to comment on Gudkov's lawsuit.

Russia's only State Duma deputy known for his support of the political opposition, Dmitry Gudkov, said Wednesday he is suing NTV television for libel over the smear campaign the unabashedly pro-Kremlin network unleashed against him in a recent film.

“Changing this 'television channel' is, of course, impossible, but failing to go to court would amount to agreeing with the slander that was voiced against me,” Gudkov said on his Facebook page.

He was referring to an NTV film — the latest in the network's series of opposition-bashing programs — that was shown at the first fall session of the State Duma in September, a few days after being broadcast on national television.

The film claims that Gudkov had told the head of the political department of the German

Embassy in Moscow, Hubert Knirsch, that Russia's political opposition forces would organize a rally unless they win an election, and praised sanctions against Moscow as useful for the opposition.

The words attributed to Gudkov were voiced by NTV's off-screen narrator.

Gudkov said his meeting with Knirsch indeed took place, but the claims NTV ascribed to him are bogus.

“I have been meeting with and will be meeting with diplomats, because I am myself a diplomat by education, a graduate of the diplomatic academy of the Russian Foreign Ministry,” Gudkov said in an earlier Facebook post in mid-September, after the film aired.

“They [at the academy] have taught us that the world is becoming global, that it is necessary to be friendly and to strengthen relations with major geopolitical players, because it's beneficial for our country,” he said.

The only soundbite that NTV managed to pull out of his 90 minute conversation with Knirsch, was Gudkov's prediction that “in a year, the economic situation in Russia will deteriorate, and protest moods will be growing,” Gudkov said on Facebook, adding that he was standing by those words.

NTV declined to comment on Gudkov's lawsuit, saying only the network has not yet received any legal papers on the matter, the RBC news agency reported.

Gudkov said on Facebook he was not seeking financial compensation from the television network, but was trying to prove a point.

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