

# Moscow Government Blocks Opposition 'March for Change' — Organizers

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December 04, 2015



Organizations including the Moscow-based Protest Action Committee and the Solidarity movement had applied for a permit for 30,000 demonstrators, hoping to hold a “March for Change” and rally in the centre of Moscow.

The Moscow city government has blocked an opposition demonstration planned for Dec. 12 — a decision deemed unlawful by the organizers, who say they are prepared to lodge a court case, Russian media reported Friday.

Organizations including the Moscow-based Protest Action Committee and the Solidarity movement had applied for a permit for 30,000 demonstrators, hoping to hold a “March for Change” and rally in the centre of Moscow, the Interfax news agency reported Tuesday.

Prominent rights campaigner Lev Ponomarev, political writer and analyst Andrei Piontkovsky, constitutional lawyer Yelena Lukyanova, and other activists were slated to appear, Interfax wrote quoting Alexander Ryshkin, a journalist and member of Solidarity.

In a separate report published Friday, the agency quoted Ryshkin as saying that Moscow authorities had not allowed the event to go ahead.

“They did not propose any alternative [dates or locations], which is clearly unlawful,” he added, Interfax reported.

According to the RBC news portal, Ryshkin quoted “preparations for New Year events” as the reason given for the refusal.

“We are basing [our reply] on Russian legislation. It never mentions New Year's preparations — nor the police being busy elsewhere — as a valid reason to ban the opposition from staging a protest,” he was quoted as saying.

The Dozhd news website wrote Friday that the Protest Action Committee intended to take the city authorities to court.

“The mayor's office has no right to refuse — in any case, we should have been presented with alternatives. I have no doubt that the action will nevertheless take place in one form or another,” Ryshkin said, Dozhd reported.

The most recent protest co-organized by the committees in Moscow was held on Sept. 20, with the authorities insisting that it be moved from the city center to the south-eastern Marino district. The police reported that 4,000 took part, with the organizers saying turnout was closer to 7,000, according to Russian media.

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Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/12/04/moscow-government-blocks-opposition-march-for-change-organizers-a51076>