

PACE Blocked From Observing Russian Elections

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The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has been excluded from participating in State Duma elections as international observers, the Kommersant newspaper reported Thursday.

The decision was made in response to the suspension of the Russian delegation's right to vote at PACE meetings following the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, Kommersant reported, citing Duma Speaker Sergei Naryshkin.

The September elections — whose slogan is “Openness, Competition and Legitimacy” — will be observed by a range of international organizations, Naryshkin said. Among the invited observers are the Commonwealth of Independent (Former Soviet) States and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union of Belarus and Russia.

Russia's Central Electoral Commission (CEC) has retained the right to ban international observers since 2011, Kommersant reported.

“Some international observers are under the influence of the United States ... If we invite a

certain number of American observers to our elections, then they should let our observers monitor the U.S. presidential elections in November,” CEC member Yevgeny Koliushin said, Kommersant reported.

Russia has been a member of the Council of Europe since 1996, but its voting rights have been suspended for the last three years over the annexation of Crimea. The Russian delegation is also suspended from acting in any of the PACE statutory bodies and from participating in the PACE monitoring missions.

The head of the Moscow region’s electoral commission resigned on Wednesday amid allegations of [voting violations](#).

Ella Pamfilova, the head of the CEC, has promised to resign in the event of unfair elections.

Correction: A previous version of this story incorrectly stated that Russia does not have a vote at Council of Europe meetings.

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