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Watchdog Under Pressure to Explain Election Boycott Websites Ban

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Russia's Central Election Commission (CEC) is to ask Internet watchdog Roskomnadzor to clarify why it blocked four websites calling for an election boycott, the state-run TASS news agency reported Tuesday.

Roskomnadzor removed information from two websites and blocked access to two others last week after they posted calls for Russian citizens to boycott the upcoming State duma elections.

The move was made at the request of the Prosecutor General's office, who believed the sites were attempting, "to coordinate the actions of citizens."

CEC chairperson Ella Pamfilova said the basis on which the websites had been blocked was not entirely clear.

"These really should be clear, and we should not step over the line that separates the

enforcement of a law and its arbitrary interpretation. Let's get some clarification," Pamfilova said.

"In the case that the law allows you to interpret, the interpretation should always be in favor of the rights of citizens," she said, TASS reported.

Roskomnadzor was given extended powers to block websites calling for "mass riots" or "extremist activities" in legislation passed during the previous session of the State Duma.

Elections for the next session of the State Duma will be held on September 18.

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