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Court Backs Moscow City Hall Decision to Ban Anti-Terror Laws Protest

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A Moscow district court has supported City Hall's decision to revoke permission for a planned opposition rally on Tuesday against controversial new anti-terror legislation.

"It sets a precedent: for the first time, officials managed to revoke a permit they had previously issued," Leonid Volkov, one of the organizers of the rally, wrote on his blog on Tuesday.

The rally had been approved earlier this month, but Moscow officials later revoked the permit, citing inaccuracies on the application form. Volkov and other activists were then rejected after applying for a second time. The group moved to sue City Hall over the issue last week, but lost.

"After discussing it with other organizers, we've come to a decision to cancel the rally today and re-apply for a permit to protest on Aug. 9," Volkov wrote.

The protest is against a controversial series of hard-hitting anti-terrorism laws passed by the Russian State Duma and signed by President Vladimir Putin this summer. Ultraconservative United Russia lawmaker Irina Yarovaya submitted the bills, alongside Federation Council member Viktor Ozerov.

The changes to existing legislation will tighten restrictions on Russians suspected of committing terrorist and extremist activities. The proposals are wide-ranging and include harsher penalties for inciting or justifying terrorism online, requiring parcels to be checked for illegal items and increasing the number of crimes with which children aged between 14 and 17 can be charged.

Communications companies will also see a crackdown, with the new laws requiring them to monitor the content of phone calls and messages and to keep them on file for six months. All messaging apps which use encryption will also be required to add additional code allowing access to the Russian security services.

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