

Exiled Oligarch Khodorkovsky Starts Search for Putin Replacement

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Mikhail Khodorkovsky

Exiled Russian oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky has announced his search to find Russia's next president.

The former Yukos chief is asking Russians to nominate potential Russian leaders via his project "Vместо Putina" or "Instead of Putin."

Khodorkovsky confirmed that he would

financially support
a candidate
chosen through the project
to rival
Russia's current
president, Vladimir Putin,
in the country's 2018 presidential elections.

He also confirmed that he would not run for president himself.

“For many years,
Kremlin spin doctors
have told the people of
Russia
that there
is no
alternative to Putin,” the project states on its website.
“

We want to show that
among 145
million Russians, we have
people
who are
able to take up the post.”

A panel of political experts
have already
put forward
13
notable figures
who they would like to see receive
Khodorkovsky's support
.

Russians
will be able
to back their favorite
nominee via the
project's website.

Candidates include former Finance Minister
Alexei Kudrin, leader of Parnas
opposition
party Mikhail Kasyanov, and
former judge Tatyana Morschakova.

The nominations were made without
prior consultation,
and those put forward to take

part in the project only heard of their own involvement on Monday morning.

One candidate, the deputy head of Transparency International Russia, Yelena Panfilova, “fell off her chair” when she heard the news, Russia's RBC newspaper reported.

Others were less enthusiastic about their surprise nominations.

“I am asking the creators of this little game to remove my name and photo from their site,” journalist Elena Rykovtseva wrote on her Facebook page. “I'm ready to follow this project from the sidelines, but no more!”

Other candidates, such as activist Alexei Navalny, are legally unable to hold office within Russia due to past criminal convictions.

Speaking to reporters on Monday, presidential spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that the Kremlin had “no interest in the project.”

“We have already read about this project in the media,” said Peskov. “It is a project which is being developed by people who are already irrevocably cut off from Russia, what's going on here, and from the Russian agenda. We do not see anything of interest in this project at all.”

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