

Duma Candidate Tries to Get Voters to 'Pokemon Go' to the Polls

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Amid a lackluster campaign season, one of Moscow's opposition candidates is trying a novel approach to bring voters to the polls this Sunday, Sept. 18, when Russia holds parliamentary elections. Maria Baronova, a coordinator for the "Open Russia" human rights project and a candidate for the State Duma in Moscow, has unveiled an [interactive map](#) of the city's downtown showing where Pokemon Go fans can play the game near voting stations in her district.

Embed:

Мария Баронова собирается привлечь избирателей с помощью покемонов <https://t.co/KTx4oMiGuD> pic.twitter.com/k7mkVdGiHd

— Баронова 2016 (@baronova2016) [September 14, 2016](#)

Announcing the gimmick, Baronova admitted on [Facebook](#) that low voter turnout plagues both local and national elections in Russia. “Legislation, the fight against the HIV epidemic, rolling back the criminalization of thought crimes — this won’t happen in a day,” she explained, sympathizing with constituents who struggle to find the motivation to show up and vote. “But you can catch a Pokemon right away on Sept. 18.”

According to Baronova, Pokemons have already had a “huge impact on the socio-political landscape” in Russia. “They’re even imprisoning people and forbidding them from searching in places where you can find the rarest Pokemons,” she wrote, alluding to [Ruslan Sokolovsky](#), the blogger in Yekaterinburg now awaiting trial for extremism charges because he published a satirical video showing him playing Pokemon Go inside a cathedral.

Sokolovsky says his stunt was a protest against warnings that Russians could be prosecuted for playing Pokemon Go in certain places, including houses of worship and voting stations.

Baronova told The Moscow Times that she isn’t calling on anyone to flout the law by playing the mobile game directly inside voting stations this weekend. “We’re just getting out the vote!” she said, explaining that the Pokemon map is an appeal to younger citizens. “I’m not even campaigning for myself here, but for the elections themselves. If somebody wants to vote for United Russia [the ruling political party], then let them.”

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<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/09/15/duma-candidate-tries-to-get-voters-to-pokemon-go-to-the-polls-a55341>