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No Surprise Candidates in Russia's 2018 Presidential Elections - Reports

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(L-R) Gennady Zyuganov, Sergei Mironov and Vladimir Zhirinovsky **Kremlin Press Service / modified by MT**

The Kremlin has already decided who will represent the opposition in Russia's 2018 presidential election, the RBK newspaper has reported.

Citing sources close to the presidential administration, RBK reports that the Kremlin has given up on the idea of looking for a "fresh face" to represent the opposition in the elections.

Instead, it will rely on members of the old guard: Gennady Zyuganov, Vladimir Zhirinovsky and Sergei Mironov, who are leaders of the parliamentary opposition.

Zyuganov, 72, has served as the head of Russia's communist party since 1994. His first presidential election was in 1996, when he lost to Boris Yeltsin in the second round. The 2018 elections will be his fifth. He came second in each race.

Zhirinovsky, 70, is the leader of Liberal Democratic party. He first took part in presidential

elections in 1991. This election will be his sixth. Mironov, 64, is the leader of Just Russia. This is going to be his third presidential election.

Kremlin political managers have been strategizing over the inclusion of new candidates in the upcoming elections to make campaigning more dramatic and to increase turnout on election day.

The turnout of previous elections suggest that Russians are disengaging from political campaigns. Recent parliamentary elections in September 2017 ended with the lowest turnout in Russia's history.

According to RBK, the Kremlin is not considering adding additional candidates to the race. "It makes no sense to demand that parties nominate alternative candidates," a source close to the Kremlin told the newspaper. Other than long time party leaders, there are simply no other recognizable faces on Russia's political scene.

Alexei Navalny, Russia's most prominent independent opposition figure, announced he will run for president in late December. However, last Wednesday Navalny was sentenced to five years probation for fraud. The court's ruling will bar him from running in the upcoming elections.

It is widely expected that Vladimir Putin will run for his fourth presidential term, though he has not officially announced it yet.

The presidential election will take place in March, 2018.

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