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The Kremlin Is Reportedly Abandoning Its Red Square Concert to Celebrate the Annexation of Crimea

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Putin addresses the crowd in Red Square in 2015. **Kremlin Press Service**

That large concert in downtown Moscow celebrating the annexation of Crimea isn't happening this year, according to the TV station Dozhd. The city is reportedly moving the festivities to another location, or perhaps canceling the show altogether.

Following personnel changes in Putin's administration, the authorities want to avoid the traffic congestion and excessive "officialdom" of past celebrations, three sources told Dozhd.

For the past two years, Moscow has staged a grand concert on March 18 to mark Crimea's reabsorption into Russia. More than 100,000 people have filled Red Square, where popular musicians perform, and Vladimir Putin addresses the crowd. Last year, the president didn't make it in person, appearing instead by satellite link, in a video beamed from Crimea.

On the condition of anonymity, three sources — one in the Kremlin, one close to the mayor's

office, and another close to the State Duma — told Dozhd that this celebration scheme is being abandoned this year as too costly and too orchestrated by the state.

Dozhd says there will probably still be a concert this year, but it won't likely take place in central Moscow. Expect future festivities to be less organized and involve more young people, sources told the TV station. Kremlin officials have reportedly been talking to student groups at Moscow State University, which could become the new epicenter for celebrating the annexation of Crimea, Dozhd says.

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