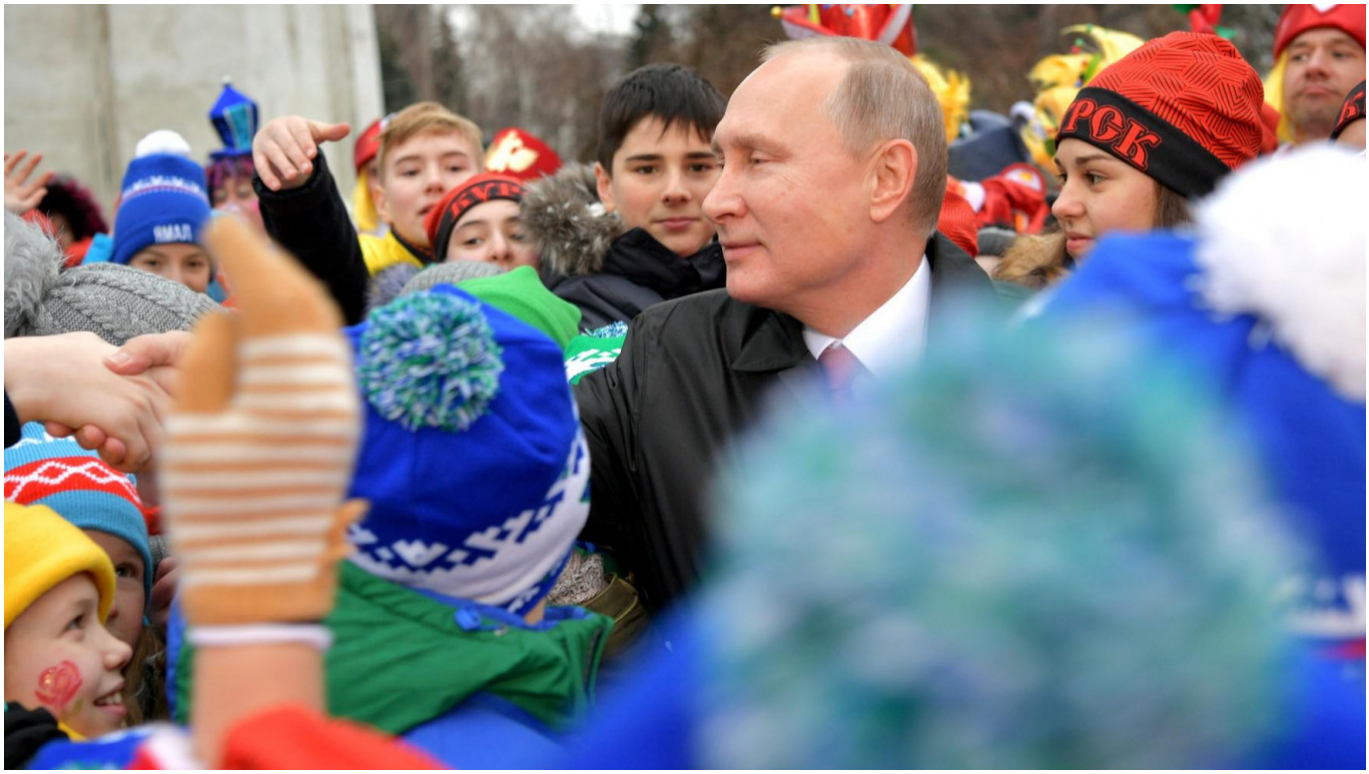
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Students Reportedly Forced To Collect Signatures for Putin

January 12, 2018



Kremlin Press Service

An activist based in St. Petersburg has sounded the alarm on a local university that is reportedly forcing students to collect signatures for President Vladimir Putin's 2018 re-election bid.

Independent candidates, which Putin is running as in this campaign, are required to collect at least 300,000 signatures to get on the ballot. The presidential campaign spokesman announced on Friday that 408,000 signatures have been gathered so far, the state-run TASS news agency reported.

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First-year students at the St. Petersburg State Polytechnic University were reportedly ordered to collect at least 14 signatures for Putin's nomination, local activist Oksana Borisova wrote

on the Russian Vkontakte social network earlier in the day.

The students were informed their efforts would “ostensibly play an important role in end-of-the-year exams," she added.

The university provost denied the accuracy of Borisova’s allegations in an interview with the Rosbalt news agency.

Dmitry Kuznetsov, the provost, did confirm Borisova’s claim that the rector is a member of the ruling United Russia party.

“But our head of research, Vitaly Vasiliyev, for example, always votes for the Communists,” he said.

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