

Zhirinovsky Promises 'Brutal Dictatorship' If He Wins Russian Election

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Vladimir Zhirinovsky **Sergei Kiselyov / Moskva News Agency**

Vladimir Putin's perennial challenger in Russia's presidential elections has pledged to crack down on oligarchs and impose a "brutal dictatorship" in the unlikely case that he is elected.

State-run surveys [suggest](#) Putin enjoys a clear path to victory in the elections two and a half weeks from now. Longtime LDPR party leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky has been polling a distant [third](#) at around six percent. He is widely seen as a figure whose outlandish statements are designed to increase public interest in an otherwise predictable political landscape.

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Speaking at a televised debate skipped by Putin, Zhirinovsky said he would "punish the oligarchs and everyone who steals" to return an [estimated](#) \$1 trillion held offshore.

"It's impossible to do in a democracy, I will introduce the most brutal dictatorship," he said

in debates [broadcast](#) by the state-run Channel One on Thursday.

At least one of the seven registered presidential candidates, [marred](#) by vulgar name-calling in the first instalment, criticized the debates as a “farce.”

“I’m not going to participate in this because you’re the ones who keep people from coming to the polls because it’s a farce,” Communist Party candidate Pavel Grudinin [declared](#) before walking off the set.

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