The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Majority of Russian Presidential Challengers Pledge Support for Separatists in Eastern Ukraine

March 13, 2018

Mikhail Sokolov / TASS

Four out of seven challengers to President Vladimir Putin's re-election bid this week have expressed support for pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine in their campaign platforms.

Russia has been accused of stoking the conflict between separatists based in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and Kiev since Ukraine's Moscow-friendly leader was toppled in 2014.

Related article: Less Than Half of Russians Surveyed Back Kremlin Support for Ukraine Separatists

Presidential candidates Vladimir Zhirinovsky, Pavel Grudinin, Maksim Suraikin and Sergei

Baburin have all pledged support for separatists as part of their foreign policy platform, an RBC business portal survey has shown on Tuesday.

“Of course, the Russians live there. How can we not help them? [...] The western world spat on the Russians of Donbass [eastern Ukraine]. Kiev seeks to leave a scorched earth there,” Zhirinovsky was cited by RBC as saying.

Zhirinovsky, the leader of Russia’s nationalist Liberal Democratic Party, called Ukraine an “artificial state cobbled together by the Bolsheviks” and called for it to join Russia “as separate regions.”

Liberal candidates Sobchak, Boris Titov and Grigory Yavlinsky have maintained that providing assistance to the Donbass was unnecessary, RBC reported.

Yavlinsky called for an end to “military, financial, diplomatic and other forms of support for the separatist forces,” as well as the withdrawal of marked or unmarked Russian troops from the region.

“Russia must end this was in all its forms,” Sobchak was quoted as saying.

Putin is expected to secure a fourth presidential term after the vote this Sunday, with seven of his challengers tracing him by more than 50 percent in state-run polls.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2018/03/13/majority-of-russian-presidential-challengers-pledge-support-for-separatists-in-eastern-ukraine-a60791