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Putin's Supporters and Communists Plan Mass Street Rallies Following Election

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Vedomosti / TASS

Russia's Communist Party and President Vladimir Putin's supporters are reportedly the only political groups planning to take to the streets after Sunday's presidential elections.

Putin, one of eight candidates in the upcoming elections, is widely expected to win a fourth term in office. Last week, anti-Kremlin left-wing activists received permission to hold a rally to "take stock" of the election results in central Moscow on the Monday after the election.

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Russia's regions have "received clear and unambiguous recommendations" to stage "a massive rally in support of Putin's victory" on March 19, an unnamed official in one of the regions told the Kommersant business daily on Wednesday.

“We’re talking about a concert-rally of more than 1,000 people. The notification should be submitted not by Putin’s headquarters, but by public figures,” an official was cited as saying.

Putin’s United Russia party offices in the Tver and Sverdlovsk regions, as well as the Crimean city of Sevastopol, reportedly plan to celebrate the four-year anniversary of Russia’s annexation of the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine with street rallies on Election Day.

The Communist Party has filed applications to hold post-election rallies in Moscow and Perm on March 19-21, according to Kommersant. Other cities, including Vladivostok and Penza, are eyeing dates ranging from March 19 to March 24.

Liberal opposition candidate Ksenia Sobchak’s regional party office chief said activists fear facing criminal prosecution for taking to the streets. Opposition leader Alexei Navalny’s camp is also “not in a hurry” to stage nationwide protests on or after election day, according to Kommersant.

Vladimir Zhirinovsky’s nationalist Liberal Democratic Party and Grigory Yavlinsky’s liberal Yabloko party offices told the outlet that they do not plan public demonstrations on or after Election Day.

“If there are any other events, then we’ll see [...] But we’re not going to do anything ourselves,” Yavlinsky’s spokesman Igor Yakovlev was cited as saying.

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