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Sobchak-Navalny Row Deepens Following Russia's Presidential Elections

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Alexei Navalny and Ksenia Sobchak **Yevgeny Feldman**

Russia's leading opposition figure Alexei Navalny has told his critics to "go to hell" after he refused to join forces with liberal politician Ksenia Sobchak during an acrimonious meeting broadcast on YouTube.

Sobchak placed fourth as a presidential candidate in Sunday's elections with 1.67 percent of the nationwide vote, far behind Vladimir Putin's record-setting 76.66 percent. Navalny, who was barred from running in the elections over a criminal conviction, had called for a boycott of the vote in an attempt to reduce the turn-out and thus reduce the legitimacy of Putin's expected victory.

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During a heated live debate in his office after the polls closed late Sunday, Navalny rejected

Sobchak's offer to join her party and unite Russia's opposition.

"I refuse to work with you. You and I have no common goal. In these so-called elections, you showed that you were a champion hypocrite," Navalny told Sobchak.

Navalny went on to allege that Sobchak had been offered "huge sums of money" to run as a Kremlin-approved spoiler candidate in Russia's elections to split the opposition.

Following the publication of the video, Navalny was accused of populism and of his criticism of Sobchak.

"Please watch this video and then go to hell," Navalny wrote on Telegram in response to the criticism, attaching a compilation of Sobchak's televised appearances in which she says that Russia's liberals must admit that they are in the minority and must accept Putin's victory.

In a Facebook post about the debate posted on Monday, Sobchak said that despite her differences with Navalny, "there are no other options than to leave our divisions and move forward."

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