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Russian Opposition Candidates Beaten, Cars Torched Ahead of Elections

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Sergei Balabayev / Facebook

Members of an opposition party running for office outside Moscow have reportedly been beaten and had their cars torched before regional elections scheduled for Sept. 9.

Voters in 22 different regions across Russia, including Moscow, will elect mayors and local legislative assembly deputies on Sunday. Seven regions will also be holding special elections for seats in the State Duma.

Parnas opposition party member Sergei Balabayev was beaten by a masked assailant who was allegedly plastering Parnas-branded flyers calling for an election boycott, the party said.

"As soon as the deputy entered the vestibule, he was immediately kicked and punched in the head, the groin and the body," Parnas wrote on its Facebook page on Wednesday.

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Balabayev has blamed the attack on the campaign staff of Roman Slonin — a candidate from the ruling United Russia party. Balabayev wrote that he recognized "regular participants" of campaign meetings held by Slonin. He pressed charges for assault and was reportedly diagnosed with a concussion.

A day earlier, another Parnas member's car was torched in a town north of Yaroslavl.

"My car was burned, I attribute this exclusively to the elections," Dmitry Bondaryov, who is running for office in Rybinsk, wrote on his Facebook page.

Parnas called on law enforcement agencies to conduct an "objective and open investigation" into both incidents and asked for protection "from this despotism."

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