

Russian Opposition Vows to Hold Moscow Protest Despite Crackdown

By [Reuters](#)

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Lyubov Sobol **Pavel Golovkin / AP / TASS**

Russian opposition activists said Thursday they planned to press ahead with an unauthorized rally in Moscow this weekend despite overnight police searches and a raft of detentions, including the jailing of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

Navalny, a prominent opposition figure, was jailed Wednesday for 30 days for calling on people to protest in Moscow this Saturday against the exclusion of several opposition-minded candidates from a Sep. 8 local election.

His allies indicated the Saturday protest would go ahead regardless of the crackdown.

"Guys, even if they bang us all up tonight, you know where to be on Saturday," Ilya Yashin, an excluded opposition election candidate and Navalny ally, wrote on Twitter.

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Lyubov Sobol, another Navalny ally barred from running, posted a flyer for the rally on her social media page late Wednesday, while Navalny's followers said in a statement Thursday they were angry but unbowed.

"Alexei's arrest won't stop the protests," they said.

Although the election to select members of Moscow city's parliament is not a national one, opposition activists view it as an opportunity to try to gain a foothold in the Russian capital where Kremlin-backed candidates have proved less popular in the past than in other parts of the country.

Election officials have barred opposition candidates from running for the Moscow city legislature however on the grounds that they failed to gather enough signatures of support.

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The barred candidates dispute that. The real reason they were blocked, they say, was to stop them from challenging the Kremlin's grip on power.

Four opposition activists had their homes searched by police Wednesday night, human rights campaigners said. One of the activists whose home was searched, Ivan Zhdanov, a Navalny ally, said he had been taken in for questioning late at night.

The crackdown came after Russia's Investigative Committee on Wednesday opened a criminal investigation into an opposition rally in June which it said may have obstructed the work of Moscow's electoral commission.

A protest last weekend calling for the candidates to be registered was attended by more than 20,000 people, according to a monitor.

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