

Russian Parents Investigated for Bringing Toddler to Moscow Protest

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Valery Sharifulin / TASS

Moscow prosecutors have asked a court to strip a couple of parental rights for “endangering” their toddler by bringing him to an opposition protest two weeks ago.

Footage published shortly after the July 27 [demonstration](#) in support of opposition candidates barred from running in Moscow’s local elections claimed to have [identified](#) an “instigator” as a volunteer for one of the candidates. The person identified as Sergei Fomin was alleged to have used a participating couple’s child as a “human shield” to walk past police and escape detention.

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“This endangered the health and life of the boy, helpless by virtue of age, and caused him physical and moral harm,” the Moscow Prosecutor’s Office [said](#) in a statement Tuesday.

The office did not identify the “instigator” or the 1-year-old’s parents, but accused them of “abusing their parental rights against the interests of their son.”

Investigators searched the parents’ apartment on Monday night, the child’s father, Dmitry Prokazov, [told](#) the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) news outlet on Tuesday.

“We are absolutely innocent. We didn’t participate in any mass riots and never left our child in danger or alone,” Prokazov said, adding that Fomin is his wife’s cousin.

The prosecutors have vowed to carry out inspections into other parents who had brought children to the demonstrations on July 27 and Aug. 3.

“One cannot talk about the deprivation of parental rights in such cases. ... It’s unacceptable to use children for blackmail in any political situation,” Moscow’s commissioner for children’s rights, Yevgeny Bunimovich, [told](#) Interfax on Tuesday.

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Fomin is [wanted](#) by the authorities as a suspect in the criminal case into “mass unrest” on July 27. He is one of 10 participants of the unauthorized demonstration who risk facing up to eight years in prison on the charges.

The rejected opposition candidates’ supporters have vowed to take to the streets again this Saturday, a demonstration approved by the authorities this time.

Update: Investigators have dropped complaints against Dmitry and Olga Prokazov despite keeping open the criminal cases into endangerment and failure to discharge parental duties.

“It’s been established that Fomin is a close relative of the child’s mother and the godfather of the Prokazov family’s children,” the couple’s lawyer [told](#) the state-run TASS news agency on Wednesday.

The Moscow Prosecutor’s Office has amended its statement, dropping its reference to “physical and moral harm caused to the child.”

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