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‘Silence Has Stopped Being a Spell of Protection’: Politics Dominate Russian GQ Awards

September 11, 2019

Kirill Serebrennikov **Sergei Bobylev / TASS**

The GQ Russia Person of the Year awards — typically an ordinary star-studded affair — turned political Tuesday night when recipients took turns voicing their opinions on this summer’s high-profile news stories.

Award winners praised the recent Russian-Ukrainian prisoner exchange and the release of Meduza investigative journalist Ivan Golunov amid near-unprecedented outcry over his arrest on drug charges in June. Some spotlighted claims of voter fraud during Sunday’s regional and local elections, while others highlighted the plight of activists who took to the streets ahead of the closely watched vote.

Related article: Russian Celebrities Show Their Support for Pro-Opposition Protesters

The next day, President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov responded by saying the Kremlin "isn't inclined to project speeches at social events to the overall mood of the country."

Here's what some of the winners said on Tuesday night:

Journalist Yury Dud, winner of the "Screen Man" award

"I have a request: The next time ordinary passersby are roughed up with truncheons, another carload of public money is stolen, another pack of scrap paper is tossed into the ballot box in Russia — I beg you to speak out instead of staying silent," Dud said.

"I think silence has stopped being a spell of protection. Being silent doesn't mean you're [non-political]," Dud said.

"They can come to any house, even if your house is on Rublevo-Uspensky Shosse. So if it makes no difference, I don't understand why we need to meet the chaos with silence instead of [going] head to head."

Embed:

> Вчера состоялось вручение премии GQ «Человек года». Собрали для вас лучшие выступления — журналиста Юрия Дудя, режиссера Кирила Серебренникова и кинокритика Антона Долина pic.twitter.com/3fzH4zcN0b
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> — МБХ Медиа (@MBKhMedia) September 11, 2019

Theater director Kirill Serebrennikov, winner of the "Person of the Year" award

"I wouldn't have chosen a person of the year," Serebrennikov, who was released on bail after 1.5 years under house arrest this spring as his criminal fraud case continues in court, said.

"I would have named those who agreed to exchange prisoners, those who didn't let Vanya Golunov get jailed, those who come out and fight for justice, allowing common sense, decency, honesty and hope to live in our country," he said.

Embed:

> Режиссер Кирилл Серебренников призвал считать людьми года тех, кто выходил на улицы. Видео: @mbkhmedia pic.twitter.com/zBttZQ9p0I
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Film critic Anton Dolin, winner of the "Author of the Year" award

Echoing Serebrennikov's praise for the latest prisoner exchange, Dolin hailed the release of filmmaker Oleg Sentsov as "an amazing miracle" and "an undeniable event of the year."

"But there's still Murphy's Law, where someone — who for five years went on single pickets at the presidential administration and other pleasant places calling for an all-for-all exchange — went to prison for nothing when this exchange happened," Dolin said.

"His name is Konstantin Kotov. He was sentenced to 4 years in prison in record time. Let's all be in favor of no more political prisoners in our country," Dolin said.

Embed:

> Кинокритик Антон Долин на вручении премии «GQ Человек года» в Московской государственной консерватории имени Чайковского назвал событием года освобождение украинского режиссера Олега Сенцова и призвал к тому, чтобы в России больше не было политзаключенных. Видео: @mbkhmedia pic.twitter.com/XTRVStadG4
>
> — МБХ Медиа (@MBKhMedia) September 10, 2019

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