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Russia Sits on the Sidelines as the World Strikes for the Climate

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Greenpeace Press Service

As many as 4 million people in 200 countries took to the streets for the Global Climate Strike on Friday — but Russia, the world's largest country, was largely absent from the event.

Inspired by 16-year-old Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg's "Fridays for Future" campaign, young people around the world have organized protests calling for global leaders to take action against the climate crisis. From Sept. 20-27, millions of people worldwide plan to walk out of work and school to take part in the Global Climate Strike.

Sixteen Russian cities took part in Friday's Global Climate Strike event. According to Greenpeace Russia, around 100 people in St. Petersburg and 40 people in Russia's third-largest city of Novosibirsk staged marches and rallies — but the strike was reduced to single pickets in Russia's capital.

Moscow authorities didn't authorize a rally for on Sept. 20 at any of the sites activists had proposed, suggesting instead to hold the protest in Sokolniki Park, outside the city center.

“Apparently, our city hall is not as interested in our future as much they are with compliance with their own laws,” the official Fridays for Future Moscow VKontakte group said.

Activists declined the Sokolniki Park suggestion and called for a single picket on Pushkin Square in central Moscow, which didn’t require the government’s approval.

Arshak Makichyan, who has been staging single pickets every Friday for the past several months to call for climate action, wrote on his VKontakte page that Russia is a “queuing country.”

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“In Moscow, 30 to 40 people came for single pickets,” Makichyan told The Moscow Times. “It isn't such a small number for Russia.”

Makichyan said that Moscow authorities didn’t sign off on the protests because Russia is “a centralized state, and they do not want a large wave of protests to hit the capital.”

Russia’s state weather service Roshydromet has said that the country is warming faster than the rest of the globe, with average temperatures in Russia rising at more than double the rate seen worldwide between 1976 and 2018.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said Monday that he had signed a government resolution on the 2015 Paris Agreement to tackle climate change, a step toward ratifying the accord.

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