

Macron Ally Drops Out of Paris Mayor Race After Russian Artist Leaks Sex Tape

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Pyotr Pavlensky, Benjamin Griveaux. **Olga Ivaschenko, Jacques Paquier / Wikicommons**

A close ally of French President Emmanuel Macron on Friday pulled out of next month's race to become mayor of Paris after a Russian dissident artist said the candidate had sent sexual images to a woman who was not his wife.

Artist Pyotr Pavlensky published screenshots of an online chat between Benjamin Griveaux and the woman on social media on Wednesday. Griveaux, 42, said he had been subject to anonymous attacks and death threats for more than a year, and that the latest incident was a new low in terms of "websites and social networks carrying ignoble attacks about my private life."

The chat [shared](#) by Pavlensky included a video showing a man's genitals. Griveaux has not disputed that he sent the messages.

Pavlensky accused Griveaux on social media Wednesday of “contradictions” between what he said was the politician’s pro-family stance and the leaked sex tape.

Related article: [Activist Pavlensky Flees Russia Seeking Political Asylum Amid Rape Allegations](#)

French politicians from all camps denounced the leak of private material, Reuters [reported](#). Many said the leak constituted an unacceptable Americanization of politics in France, where politicians' private lives have long been considered off limits.

Griveaux is one of the "Macron boys" — the clique that helped propel the former investment banker to the Elysee Palace. Griveaux was central to Macron's bid to control the French capital and build a local power base for his party in mayoral elections next month.

France granted Pavlensky, his partner and two daughters, political asylum in 2017. He had fled Russia that year facing what he claimed were false sexual allegations.

Pavlensky has gained notoriety in Russia for his anti-Kremlin stunts that included nailing his testicles to the Red Square and burning down the Federal Security Service building’s front doors.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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