The Moscow Times
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Independent Russian Journalist, Elections Expert Reports Threats

March 26, 2021



Vasily Weissenberg (right) with Grigory Melkonyants. **Vasiliy Weissenberg / Facebook**

An independent Russian journalist and elections expert has reported receiving threats toward his family and surveillance over his article about a regional elections official seeking re-election to the State Duma this September.

Vasily Weissenberg, an expert at the independent Golos election monitor, had published an article about Andrei Gibert, the head of the Yamal-Nenets autonomous district's electoral commission. The article alleges that Gibert's salary is several times higher than that of fellow regional election officials and surpasses that of the Yamal-Nenets governor.

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Weissenberg wrote on Facebook on Thursday that an unknown man had called his wife, demanding the article be taken down immediately and implying that their son could be harmed: "I don't want Misha to fall off the scooter next time. Do you understand me?"

In an interview with the independent Dozhd broadcaster, Weissenberg said he had only taken his son to kindergarten with a scooter for the first time that day.

He added that he thinks someone has been watching his family.

Weissenberg told Dozhd he thinks the threat may have been an attempt to sabotage Gilbert's re-election campaign in the fall, as his article didn't reveal any new information.

"This is already such an intra-elite game that my report just became a trigger for them. They decided that if they intimidate me, then I will most likely write about this, and this will hit Andrei Gibert and maybe he won't be re-elected," Weissenberg said.

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