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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Climate Strike Protester Announces Parliamentary Run

June 19, 2021



Arshak Makichyan said he was motivated by what he calls a worsening human rights situation in Russia.
Screenshot / Arshak Makichyan / Facebook

Russian youth climate protester Arshak Makichyan will run for a seat in the lower-house State Duma in this September's high-stakes parliamentary elections, he announced Saturday.

Makichyan, 26, rose to prominence over the past two years by staging weekly solo pickets on central Moscow's Pushkin Square that called for greater action against climate change. Inspired by Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg's Fridays for Future movement, he and other young Russians coordinated climate strike activities across the country.

"The time has come to move on," Makichyan said in a video posted to social media announcing his campaign for the Duma.

Embed:

> Пришло время двигаться дальше. Надеюсь на вашу поддержку!
> It's time to move on. I hope for your support ◙ pic.twitter.com/qRyXKNqB34
>
> — Arshak Makichyan (@MakichyanA) June 19, 2021

Makichyan said he was motivated by recent events that Kremlin critics describe as an intensifying campaign of repression against dissenters as well as human rights issues like domestic violence and anti-LGBT repression.

“It is impossible to fight for the future in a country where many people have no present. It is impossible to keep talking only about the climate and the environment when people are poisoned with military toxins and domestic violence victims are kidnapped and sent to where they can simply be killed,” he wrote in a social media post accompanying his announcement.

He also pointed to Russia’s banning of poisoned and jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny’s networks — Russia’s main grassroots opposition force — by branding them as “extremist” organizations. A separate law passed this month bans members of “extremist” organizations from running for office, shutting out anyone affiliated with Navalny’s groups from the ballot for 3-5 years.

Related article: Meet Moscow's Lone #ClimateStrike Protester

“If nothing is done, then the feminists and eco-activists are next,” he wrote.

This September's State Duma polls will see the ruling, pro-Kremlin United Russia party seek to hold onto its majority amid its deepening unpopularity driven by stagnating living standards, endemic corruption and voter fatigue.

If elected, Makichyan said he plans to raise greater awareness of climate issues among lawmakers, fight against repressions and demand the repeal of “prohibitive laws.”

“Without changes at the political level, it will be impossible to solve our problems: This is a complex crisis,” Makichyan wrote. “It's not Navalny who is being killed, it's our future. Just sitting by and watching is not an option.”

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