

UN 'Dismayed' by Russia Undermining Election Rights

By [AFP](#)

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Michelle Bachelet **Fabrice Coffrini / AFP**

The UN rights chief said Monday she was "dismayed" by the Kremlin's moves to undermine the right to voice critical opinions and participate in Russia's forthcoming elections.

"I am dismayed by recent measures that further undermine people's right to express critical views, and their ability to take part in the parliamentary elections scheduled in September," Michelle Bachelet told the opening of the UN Human Rights Council's 47th session, as she urged Russia to uphold civil and political rights and fall into line with international standards.

She highlighted, in particular, the recent moves to dismantle the movement of Russia's main opposition politician Alexei Navalny, currently behind bars.

Barring his organizations from working in the country, a Moscow court earlier this month branded them as "extremist", in a ruling Bachelet said was "based on vaguely-defined

allegations of attempting to change the foundations of constitutional order."

Russian President Vladimir Putin has meanwhile signed legislation outlawing staff, members, and sponsors of "extremist" groups from running in parliamentary elections.

"I call on Russia to uphold civil and political rights," Bachelet said, insisting "legislation restricting the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association should be brought in line with international human rights norms and standards."

"I further urge the authorities to end the arbitrary practice of labeling ordinary individuals, journalists, and non-governmental organizations as 'extremists', 'foreign agents' or undesirable organizations."

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