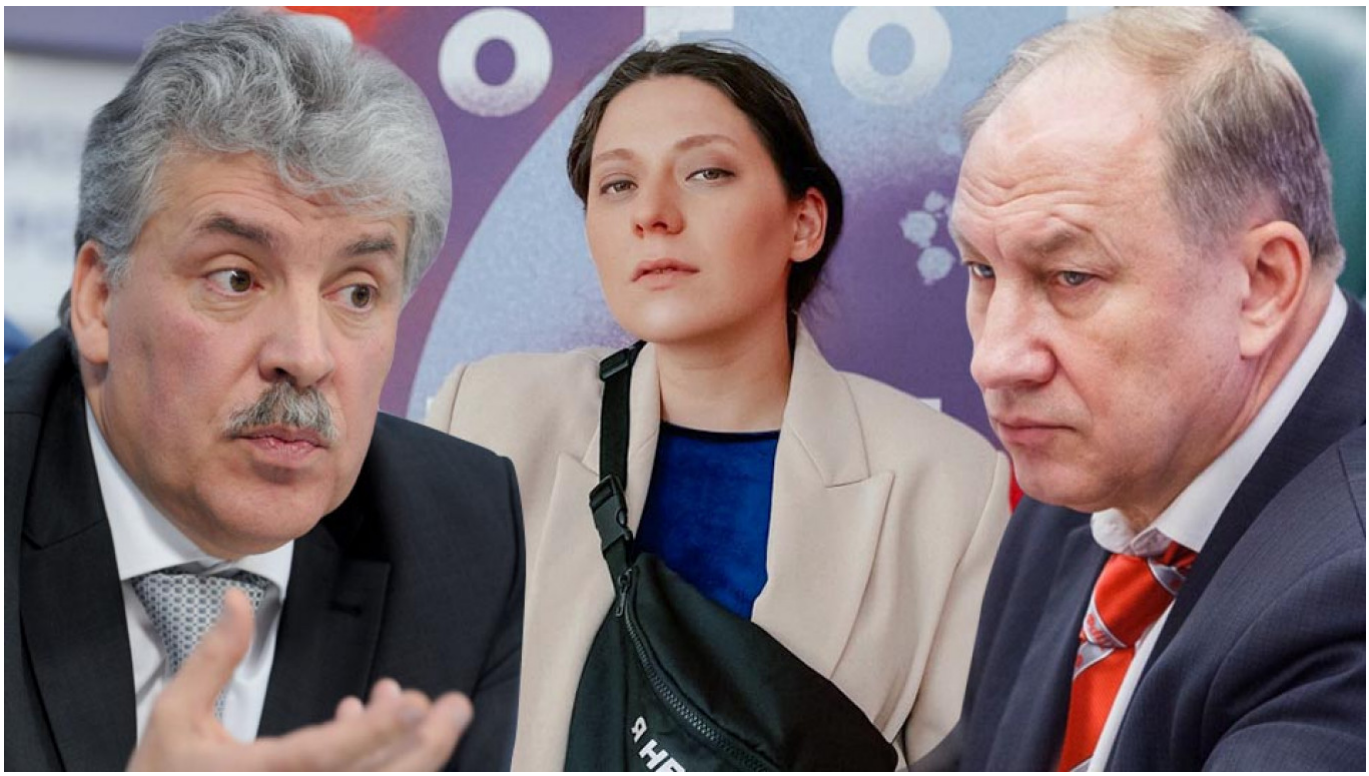
The Moscow Times
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Russia Bans Navalny-Linked Candidate From St. Petersburg Assembly Elections

July 27, 2021



Pavel Grudinin, Irina Fatyanova, Valery Rashkin **Moskva News Agency, Twitter, Wikicommons / MT**

The St. Petersburg election commission has banned the former head of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's headquarters, Irina Fatyanova, from running in elections to the city's legislative assembly, she said on Twitter Tuesday.

According to Fatyanova, the election commission accused her of leading an extremist organization, citing a Moscow court decision to outlaw all the Navalny activist networks as "extremist" last month.

"If someone thinks that I will step aside and will not fight back my right to participate in the elections, they are very mistaken ... This decision speaks only of cowardice," she wrote.

Related article: Russian Opposition Deputy Barred From Moscow Elections Over Navalny Support

Fatyanova is the latest candidate to be excluded from elections as the Kremlin intensifies its crackdown on opposition voices.

Critics say the authorities have been tightening the screws on dissent ahead of crucial Sept. 19 elections to Russia's lower house of parliament, the State Duma, with arrests, detentions and raids against opposition politicians and activists.

Last month, another prominent Navalny ally, Ilya Yashin, was barred from running in the upcoming Moscow City Duma elections due to his association with Navalny's "extremist" organizations. However, Yashin claims he never worked for any Navalny-associated organization.

On Monday, Nikolai Bondarenko, a former Communist Party candidate and also a Navalny supporter, was barred from running in the upcoming Duma elections, he said on his YouTube channel. Bondarenko was detained in February for attending pro-Navalny rallies.

Last week, communist candidate Pavel Grudinin was banned from running in the upcoming elections. The Central Electoral Commission cited ownership of foreign assets as the reason for his exclusion, However, Grudinin told the Dozhd television channel he believes the decision was politically motivated.

The ruling, pro-Kremlin United Russia party is seeking to maintain its supermajority in the Duma in September despite historically low approval ratings.

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