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Independent Russian News Site's Hackers Urge Readers to Boycott Election

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Independent Russian news website The Bell said it was hacked after its newsletter subscribers received an email that urged them to boycott the country's upcoming parliamentary elections.

"Boycotting the State Duma elections will force the country's leadership to pay attention to the problems of the people, and will open up an opportunity for building a democratic society," read the newsletters that The Bell's subscribers received Thursday morning.

The newsletter also urged subscribers to stage solo pickets on Sept. 19 to demand honest elections involving opposition candidates.

Shortly after the email was sent, The Bell said it had been hacked and issued an apology on Twitter.

“We were hacked again. Our subscribers have just received a newsletter with a strange provocative text that we did not write or send,” The Bell tweeted from its Russian-language account, adding that it was looking into what happened.

Critics of the Kremlin accuse it of coordinating a crackdown on Russia’s remaining opposition forces and independent media ahead of the Sept. 17-19 election that will see the ruling, pro-Kremlin United Russia battle historic unpopularity.

Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny and his supporters are promoting a “Smart Voting” strategy that urges voters to rally behind the candidate most likely to defeat the United Russia incumbent.

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