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Moscow Says 16 Candidates Have Filed to Run for President So Far

By AFP

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Vladimir Putin and Russian Central Election Commission chairwoman Ella Pamfilova. **kremlin.ru**

Sixteen candidates have filed to run for Russia's presidency next year, officials said Wednesday, in an election that is expected to easily hand Vladimir Putin a fifth term.

Moscow has for years sidelined opposition figures from elections and political life, a clampdown that accelerated after the Kremlin ordered Russian troops into Ukraine in 2022.

"So far, we have received applications from 16 candidates for the presidential election," the chairman of the Central Election Commission (CEC) Ella Pamfilova was cited as saying by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

Putin confirmed this month during a meeting with military veterans that he would join the election scheduled to be held next year over three days beginning March 15.

The CEC said it would also hold the ballot in four Ukrainian regions partially occupied by

Russian forces and in the Crimean peninsula, annexed from Kyiv in 2014.

Related article: Russia's Far-Right LDPR Nominates Leader for 2024 Presidential Race

The Kremlin-friendly Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) of Russia this week nominated a former negotiator for the Ukraine conflict, Leonid Slutsky, as a candidate.

He said his candidacy would not "take away votes" from Putin.

Candidates must file applications to run in the March vote by Dec. 27, election rules state, after which they will be required to gather thousands of signatures from supporters to secure a place on the ballot.

Igor Girkin, a hardline nationalist turned Kremlin critic who is in detention awaiting trial on extremism charges, said he wanted to challenge Putin.

Jailed opposition figure Alexei Navalny was barred from running in elections in 2018 due to an old fraud charge that his allies said was politically motivated.

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