

Pro-Peace Putin Challenger Blocked From Ballot

December 23, 2023



Yekaterina Duntsova speaks to journalists after submitting her documents as a presidential candidate to Russia's Central Election Committee in Moscow, Dec. 20. **Alexander Zemlianichenko / AP / TASS**

Independent Russian presidential candidate Yekaterina Duntsova will not be permitted to appear on the ballot in the March 2024 vote after the Central Election Commission (CEC) rejected her nomination documents.

Duntsova, 40, a journalist and local politician from the Tver region northwest of Moscow, announced her bid for the presidency in November on a pro-peace, pro-democracy platform.

This week, she [secured](#) the endorsement of an initiative group of more than 500 supporters as is required for candidates not running as part of a political party.

At a meeting Saturday, the Central Election Commission (CEC) rejected her documents, saying it found over 100 typos and other errors, the Ostorozhno Novosti Telegram news channel [reported](#).

“We have carefully studied the documents, and we have the impression that they were filled out in haste without complying with legal standards,” the BBC's Russian service [quoted](#) CEC member Yevgeny Shevchenko as saying at the commission's meeting.

If the CEC had accepted her documents, she would have then needed to collect 300,000 unique voter signatures from at least 40 regions of Russia to be able to appear on the ballot.

Following the meeting, Duntsova said she plans to appeal the commission's decision in court and intends to ask the liberal Yabloko party to nominate her as a candidate.

“I want us all to believe that we will be able to take another chance. Don't lose faith, don't lose hope,” she [said](#).

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Duntsova's campaign has reported several instances of pressure since she announced her bid for the presidency.

She was [summoned](#) to the prosecutor's office to discuss her campaign and attitude toward Russia's actions in Ukraine shortly after announcing her campaign.

One of Duntsova's supporters was [detained](#) in the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk after returning from the nomination meeting, according to women's activist group Myagkaya Sila (Soft Power). The supporter, who is also a member of Myagkaya Sila, was reportedly accused of falsely [filing a complaint](#) against a police officer.

She has also faced speculation that she could be a Kremlin-endorsed spoiler candidate.

The state-run RIA Novosti news agency [claimed](#) this week without evidence that Duntsova had the financial backing of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a former oligarch turned exiled Kremlin critic.

President Vladimir Putin, 71, is expected to handily win re-election to a fifth term — keeping him in power until at least 2030 — in the March 2024 vote after the elimination of virtually all opposition.

“Yekaterina Sergeyevna, you are a young woman, you still have everything ahead of you. Any minus can always be turned into a plus. Any experience is still experience,” CEC chief Ella Pamfilova [told](#) Duntsova at the end of Saturday's meeting.

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