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Russian Election Authority Says 'Dead Souls' Endorsed Anti-War Hopeful Nadezhdin

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Boris Nadezhdin submits signatures to Russia's Central Election Commission. **Vera Savina / AFP**

Russian election authorities said Friday that signatures of endorsement for anti-war presidential hopeful Boris Nadezhdin included "dead souls," thus appearing to set the stage for his disqualification from the race.

Nadezhdin, who has emerged as the presidential election's leading pro-peace voice, said Wednesday he had submitted 105,000 signatures to the Central Election Commission (CEC) for review.

Russian election law requires potential candidates running from a party without representation in parliament to collect 100,00 signatures of endorsement.

"There are errors [in Nadezhdin's signatures] that elicit surprise," CEC deputy chief Nikolai Bulayev was quoted as saying by the state-run news agency TASS.

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“When we see dozens and dozens of people who are no longer alive leaving signatures, the question arises about the purity of ethical norms, including by signature collectors,” he said.

“To some extent, the candidate is directly involved,” Bulayev added.

Bulayev noted that the CEC verifies the signatures with Russian law enforcement and other government databases.

Nadezhdin saw a surge in popularity last month as long lines of Russians both at home and abroad formed at his campaign's offices to endorse his election bid.

But some observers doubt that authorities will allow him to run for president despite his campaign's highly visible signature collection drive.

Bulayev said the CEC plans to invite Nadezhdin to one of their sessions on Monday to show the errors found in his signatures.

A final list of registered presidential candidates is expected on Wednesday.

President Vladimir Putin’s campaign last week submitted 315,000 out of the 300,000 signatures required for independent candidates not running from any party.

Putin, 71, is widely expected to win his fifth overall term in office.

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