

# Not Even a Putinist Minister's Suicide Could Unite Russia's Opposition

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Ex-Transport Minister Roman Starovoit. **Social Media**

The death of the Transport Minister and former governor of the Kursk region Roman Starovoit split Russia's already fractured opposition.

Supporters of the Anti-Corruption Fund (FBK) were the first to react. Their reaction was predictable: "Another servant of the dictator died." Leonid Volkov, head of political projects, [wrote](#) that it was "the most honest way" to get off the list where the organization recommends individuals for sanctioning.

However, the wide range of people on this list raises questions over the list's purpose in the first place. Remember how the founders of the facial recognition system NtechLab, Artem Kukharensky and Alexander Kabakov, were removed from the list following public discussion about how they did not meet the inclusion criteria, only to be [added](#) back on later? Despite them having [resigned](#) over disagreement with the firm's decision to keep operating in Russia,

they remain on the list.

The picture is muddled further by Volkov [signing](#) letters in 2023 requesting that sanctions on Mikhail Friedman be lifted. Meanwhile, Friedman is one of the largest Russian oligarchs, whose influence on Moscow's policy is no less significant than Starovoit's. Friedman has not made any anti-war statements, let alone actions. Rather the opposite: he left increasingly uncomfortable London for Israel before hurrying back to Moscow.

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The head of the FBK's investigation department, Maria Pevchikh, was more constructive. She [offered](#) Putin officials amnesty to defect and spill Putin's secrets in safety. However, she did not specify who should provide these people with the safety from the tyrant's reach.

A more moderate segment of the opposition, Maxim Katz and Andrei Pivovarov, thought that it was shameful for Volkov to gloat when a person has taken their life, no matter who they were. Andrei Pivovarov [noted](#) that such rhetoric scares away potential defectors who could side with the opposition.

That it is possible and necessary to create alliances with representatives of the regime is not a new idea. It is generally a rational one, tool. But first we need to understand what such an alliance is and what are the principles of its formation.

A benefit of forming alliances is increasing the pool of resources at your disposal. But that presupposes that the allies have strength and support in the first place.

Today, the Russian opposition remains out of politics in every meaningful sense: they have no manifesto, no organized structure. Leaders are only recognized as such by virtue of their public profiles. They prefer not to build institutions, not to create parties or movements, but simply to run YouTube channels. Thus, talking about scaring off allies laughably assumes they are the kinds of people one would want to form an alliance with.

The key task for the opposition is to become a real force. Without this, it makes no sense to talk about pacts with former ministers, oligarchs or officials. When the time comes, they will look for allies among those who can support them, or at least give serious guarantees of security and freedom. This can hardly be expected from YouTubers.

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The ideological vacuum is also noticeable in the way exactly the opposition present themselves. The FBK works on the principle tht everything President Vladimir Putin does is bad. In many ways, that assessment is fair. But criticism should be followed by a constructive agenda. What do we offer instead of what Putin does?

The FBK is trying to formulate such an agenda through the reconstruction projects discussed at the Yulia Navalnaya Forum. But so far the forum's experts have not produced a serious result. There is no positive, mature plan.

But those who criticize the FBK — Maxim Katz, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Andrei Pivovarov — position themselves as the antidote to the more famous organisation. If they gloat, we, on the contrary, grieve. If they are hard, we are soft. But similarly, they have no strategy, program, nor concrete political steps behind them.

The Russian opposition suffers from the same problems as before the war: the lack of a clear political program and a political organization capable of implementing change. Until both appear, all talk about alliances, strategy and influence will remain empty dreams.

*The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.*

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