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Central Election Commission Bars Yabloko Candidates From St. Petersburg Ballot

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Members of Yabloko in St. Petersburg. **yabloko.ru**

Russia's Central Election Commission (CEC) on Friday upheld its St. Petersburg branch's decision to bar candidates nominated by the liberal Yabloko party for the upcoming regional parliamentary elections over a technical paperwork issue.

St. Petersburg's 50-seat legislative assembly, where Yabloko currently holds two seats, is one of eight mostly northwestern Russian regions where Yabloko is fielding candidates in local elections this September.

City election authorities disqualified Yabloko's entire candidate slate last week on claims a notarized power of attorney lacked explicit language authorizing the party representative to sign financial disclosure paperwork.

Though Yabloko quickly resubmitted corrected notarized documents, St. Petersburg's election

commission rejected the fix, ruling that authority could not be granted retroactively.

On Friday, the CEC voted unanimously to reject Yabloko's appeal to the St. Petersburg commission's decision. The party said it plans to appeal that rejection in court.

Yabloko chairman Nikolai Rybakov accused election officials of systematically targeting the party because it "opposes the authorities and defends residents and the city of St. Petersburg."

The disqualification of Yabloko candidates in St. Petersburg contrasts with the CEC's decision on Wednesday to clear the party to field candidates in nationwide elections for the State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament.

Yabloko is the only officially registered political party running on a pro-peace platform amid a broader crackdown on anti-war dissent.

Russian authorities have jailed several prominent Yabloko members in recent years on charges connected to their criticism of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

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