

Communist Bondarenko Barred From Running in State Duma Elections

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Nikolai Bondarenko. kprf.ru

The Central Election Commission on Monday [barred](#) Communist Party candidate Nikolai Bondarenko from running in Russia's upcoming parliamentary elections following his recent conviction for displaying "extremist" symbols.

Bondarenko, a former Saratov regional lawmaker and popular YouTuber with more than 2 million subscribers, was detained and fined last month over an old social media post featuring a photo of the late opposition activist Alexei Navalny.

His defense team argued that the account that made the post does not belong to Bondarenko. A judge rejected an appeal against the ruling and fine last week.

On Monday, election officials, citing the "extremism" charge, voted to remove Bondarenko from the ballot in this month's State Duma elections.

Russian election laws prohibit anyone convicted of an "extremism" offense from running for

office for a year.

In a statement, the Communist Party [accused](#) officials of blocking Bondarenko's election bid because they are "afraid."

Related article: [Moscow Police Detain Yabloko Candidates Running in State Duma Elections](#)

Bondarenko rose to national fame through his fiery, unfiltered attacks against Russia's deeply unpopular 2018 pension reforms.

During his tenure in the Saratov regional assembly from 2017 to 2021, he built a large social media following through theatrical political stunts, including a [viral experiment](#) where he tried to survive on a monthly pension of 3,500 rubles (\$52).

His populist rhetoric, savvy use of social media and diatribes against the ruling United Russia party earned him high praise from Navalny, who once [dubbed](#) Bondarenko his "favorite" regional lawmaker.

Bondarenko was stripped of his seat in the Saratov regional assembly in 2022 after state prosecutors [claimed](#) he failed to declare ad revenues and user donations generated through his popular YouTube channel.

His disqualification from the upcoming State Duma election follows a series of similar cases in which potential candidates have faced charges that effectively bar them from office.

On Monday, the chairman of the liberal Yabloko party in Yekaterinburg was also detained and charged over displaying "extremist" symbols in old social media posts, the newspaper Kommersant [reported](#).

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