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Yabloko Leader Slams Exiled Opposition's Voting Strategy

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Nikolai Rybakov at a meeting with supporters in St. Petersburg. **SOTAvision / Telegram**

Nikolai Rybakov, the chairman of the liberal opposition party Yabloko, has criticized the tactical voting strategy promoted by exiled opposition figures Yulia Navalnaya and Maxim Katz ahead of this weekend's parliamentary elections.

In a video released on Monday, Navalnaya and Katz said they had joined forces and agreed to endorse a joint slate of candidates running for the lower-house State Duma in single-seat constituencies. For party-list candidates, they urged Russian voters to back anyone running from a political party other than the ruling United Russia party.

Speaking to a crowd of supporters in St. Petersburg on Tuesday evening, Rybakov balked at the idea of voting for candidates in nominally opposition parties that he said have backed the war against Ukraine, as well as repressive political measures against anti-war Russians.

"These people put my comrades in prison for 11 years, and now you want us to support them in the elections?" Rybakov said, referring to the political prosecutions of Yabloko members in

recent years.

“[Navalnaya and Katz] are proposing to dance to their tune again and vote for the very people who led to the death of people in Russia and Ukraine,” he said in a video shared by the outlet Varlamov News.

Rybakov accused Navalnaya and Katz of “manipulating [voters] from abroad” and told supporters that following their voting strategy “will end in the deaths of people and prison terms.”

Related article: Russia’s Opposition Wants You to Vote Against United Russia. That’s Where Its Strategy Ends.

Yabloko, Russia’s oldest liberal party, was disqualified from the party-list vote after the Russian Supreme Court ruled in August that it had engaged in copyright violations during political campaigning and had broken campaign finance laws.

More than 100 Yabloko candidates, who are all running on a pro-peace platform, are still allowed to compete in single-member constituencies, but they appear unlikely to win any seats in parliament.

Under Russian election law, half of the State Duma’s 450 seats are distributed among the list of political parties that receive more than 5% of the votes. The remaining 225 seats are given to the winners of elections in single-member constituencies.

Under Rybakov’s leadership, Yabloko has urged supporters to spoil party-list ballots and vote for the remaining single-district candidates when three-day voting begins this Friday.

Four other systemic opposition parties are participating in the State Duma elections: the Communist Party, the ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), New People and the left-leaning A Just Russia party. Each party broadly supports the war against Ukraine and tends to vote in line with United Russia on key issues.

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