

St. Petersburg Court Fines Yabloko Leader \$12 for Writing Peace Slogans on Ballot

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Nikolai Rybakov at the polling station. yabloko.ru

A St. Petersburg judge on Friday [fined](#) Yabloko party Chairman Nikolai Rybakov 1,000 rubles (\$11.80) for writing anti-war slogans on his ballots during last month's State Duma elections.

Rybakov had written four party slogans on his ballots while voting at a polling station on Sept. 20: "For Peace," "For Freedom," "For a Life Without Fear" and "For a Ceasefire Agreement."

Police [accused](#) him of "ignoring society's interests, showing disrespect and breaking public order."

The Vyborgsky District Court found Rybakov guilty of disorderly conduct.

Rybakov and his defense urged the court to drop all charges, maintaining that spoiling a ballot is a legally recognized form of political expression.

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Rybakov and his lawyers sought dismissal of the case, arguing that spoiling a ballot was a lawful form of political expression.

“I expressed my civic stance that I couldn’t vote because there was no one to vote for... Over 900,000 voters did the exact same thing by invalidating their ballots,” Rybakov [said](#) during an earlier hearing.

Rybakov was not present for Friday’s verdict, which was briefly [interrupted](#) by an evacuation order.

Yabloko, Russia’s oldest liberal party, was the only registered political party campaigning for peace in the 2026 State Duma elections.

Rybakov's case came amid mounting pressure on the party. Three prominent Yabloko members have received prison sentences in the past four months, most recently [Yelena Perepelitsa](#) on Thursday.

Yabloko candidates were widely barred from contesting the Sept. 18-20 elections, in which the ruling United Russia party secured a record majority in the State Duma.

Besides being struck from the party-list ballot, Yabloko’s candidates running for seats in the lower house faced interference from the authorities, police detentions and disqualification in single-member constituencies where they could still run.

Yabloko was also barred from almost all regional legislative elections. The northwestern Novgorod region was the only region where Yabloko cleared the 5% vote threshold needed to win seats in the regional legislature.

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