

Elections Chief Says He Expects Increase in Complaints

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The  **Moscow Times**

Central Elections Commission head Vladimir Churov said Thursday that he expects there to be more public complaints about falsifications after the March 4 presidential vote than after the State Duma elections, due to a "command" by opposition newspaper Novaya Gazeta to file them, RIA-Novosti reported.

Novaya Gazeta published an opinion article last week in which columnist Alexei Polukhin claims that Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's campaign will seek at least 52 percent of the vote to avoid a runoff and that 3 to 5 percent of those votes will need to be thrown out to force the election into a second round.

"We will need to question the authenticity of 3 to 5 percent of votes, which means 210,000 to 350,000 violations will be needed. I don't know whether it's possible to do that, but we have to strive toward that with all our powers," Polukhin wrote, implying that at least that many violations will occur.

Churov said he viewed this as a call to readers to inflate the number of violations they observe

during the election.

"I, unfortunately, expect a certain increase in the number of [violation] filings after March 4," Churov said in an interview on radio station Vesti-FM, RIA-Novosti reported.

"I saw a clearly formulated political command in a certain newspaper," Churov said.

The elections commission chief sent a letter to the Prosecutor's Office notifying them of his suspicions and requesting that the article's legality be verified, RIA-Novosti reported.

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