

NTV Says Proposed Boycott is Anti-Democratic

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The ownership of state-controlled channel NTV said the boycott of the channel called for in reaction to a program critical of the protest movement is anti-democratic and harmful to free speech.

"I think that the calls to boycott NTV and disrupt the work of the website are in fact actions against democratic mechanisms, public discussion, and the free exchange of opinion for all members of society," Gazprom-Media general director Nikolai Senkevich said in a statement posted on the company's website.

Gazprom-Media, a state-controlled holding company, owns NTV.

Protesters have also called for a boycott of Proctor and Gamble as one NTV's largest advertisers.

The company has said this represents unfair pressure on an organization that doesn't take part in politics.

"Proctor and Gamble respects the rights of citizens to express their positions...the company strictly adheres to the principle of doing business outside of politics," a company spokesperson told RIA-Novosti.

There has been outcry from bloggers and opposition activists against NTV after the channel aired a documentary film called "Anatomy of Protest" on Thursday and Sunday. The film suggested that some participants of recent opposition rallies had been hired to attend. At an unsanctioned protest outside the Ostankino television tower on Sunday more than 100 demonstrators were arrested.

Several law suits have been filed against NTV in connection with the show, and the channel's website has faced frequent distributed-denial-of-service attacks since Friday.

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