

Archived Live Blog: 'March of Millions' Opposition Protest

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The latest "March of Millions" opposition event is set to take place from 1 to 6 p.m. Tuesday, which is also the national Russia Day holiday. The march, with an announced attendance of up to 50,000 people, will begin at Pushkin Square and go east along the Boulevard Ring to Turgenyevskaya Ploshchad, then head north to Prospekt Akademika Sakharova, where a rally will be held from 3 to 6 p.m.

The event comes a day after investigators searched the homes of opposition leaders, including Alexei Navalny, Sergei Udaltsov, Ilya Yashin and Kseniya Sobchak, confiscating computers and at least 1 million euros worth of cash. The four leaders were asked to appear for questioning at noon Tuesday in connection with the violence at the May 6 "March of Millions," raising the possibility that they could miss Tuesday's march.

The event Tuesday will also be the first opposition protest since the passing of a law increasing fines for illegal demonstrators, to a maximum of 300,000 rubles (\$9,150)

for participants and 1 million rubles for organizers.

5:57 p.m., Wrapping Up: No Violence or Detentions; Protesters Seemed 'Determined': The violence that broke out between police and protesters at the May 6 “March of Millions” did not repeat Tuesday as some observers had feared. There were no detentions and public safety was upheld, Moscow police said in a statement on their website. That compares to around 450 demonstrators arrested at the May 6 event.

The crowd was not clearly much larger or smaller than on May 6, Moscow Times journalist Jonathan Earle reported. Police estimated that around 18,000 demonstrators took part in Tuesday's march and 15,000 people in the rally, while organizers' estimates ranged from 50,000 to 200,000 people present at the events. On May 6, police estimated that 8,000 people marched in the opposition event, and organizers said they thought as many as 100,000 people took part.

Protesters on Tuesday seemed “determined,” Earle said. They came to the event despite the recent passing of a law raising fines for illegal protest activity; on a day when some leaders of the opposition, including Alexei Navalny, were absent due to their being called in for questioning by the Investigative Committee; and with a weather forecast of heavy thunderstorms. He said the mood Tuesday was not as angry as on May 6 and not as festive as at on Dec. 10 at Bolotnaya Ploshchad, when opposition demonstrators gathered for the second time following the disputed State Duma elections on Dec. 4.

Visit our home page later this evening to read an article and see a gallery of photos on Tuesday's event. Thanks for reading.

5:00 p.m., Musicians Performing as Rally Comes to a Close: Many demonstrators have left the opposition rally at Prospekt Akademika Sakharova after rain from a thunderstorm began to fall, Interfax reported. Musical groups continue to perform on stage.

4:51 p.m., Chirikova Lists Opposition Goals: Opposition leader and environmental activist Yevgenia Chirikova spoke second-to-last at the rally before the musical performances began and read a list of actions the opposition believes are necessary to dismantle the current power structure, according to Slon.ru:

1. “The resignation of Vladimir Putin
2. The development of a new elections law in parliament
3. The passing of that law by the current parliament
4. The election of a new parliament
5. The new parliament examining and significantly limiting the presidential term of office
6. The new parliament choosing a new presidential elections law and appointing a date of a new presidential election and gubernatorial elections
7. A new parliament”

4:41 p.m., Downpour Hits Rally: Heavy rain from a thunderstorm has started falling on protesters as rock musician Gleb Samoilov performs on stage, Kommersant-FM correspondent Nikita Batalov wrote on Twitter. “I'm waiting for lightning to hit the stage,” Batalov wrote. Dozens of demonstrators ran away from the rally site under umbrellas, blogger Pyotr Shkumatov wrote on Twitter.

4:31 p.m., Police Release Photos Taken From Chopper: The Moscow police published on their website low-resolution photographs of the crowd at the rally on Prospekt Akademika Sakharova, to allow the media to estimate the crowd size. The posted photos do not include images of the march.

The police and opposition rally organizers have in recent months given estimates of crowd sizes that differ by tens of thousands of people.

Below, one of the photos of the rally posted on the police website and time-stamped 2:41 p.m., about 10 minutes after speakers began addressing the crowd from the stage and 20 minutes before the scheduled start of the event.



4:16 p.m., Meanwhile, Medvedev Is in the Woods: As the opposition rally appears to be coming to a close, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev just tweeted the following picture to his followers, along with the message: "Happy Russia Day!"



4:06 p.m., Crowd Beginning to Disperse; Musical Performances Expected: Demonstrators are beginning to leave the rally at Prospekt Akademika Sakharova and the crowd is thinning out, Moscow Times journalist Rachel Nielsen reported from the scene. They appear to be leaving of their own volition, not being pushed out by police officers. There are supposed to be musical performances on stage, and the rally was set to last until 6 p.m.

3:59 p.m., Navalny Won't Speak, But Video of Him Draws Applause: Anti-corruption lawyer Alexei Navalny, who had an appointment to speak with investigators at noon Tuesday, will not attend the rally, environmental activist leader Yevgenia Chirikova told the crowd, Moscow Times journalist Jonathan Earle reported from the scene. But a video of Navalny speaking at a rally in December was played on a screen, made into a kind of rap, that drew cheers from the crowd. A refrain of “party of crooks and” was completed by the crowd with the word “thieves,” referring to the name Navalny coined for ruling party United Russia.

3:49 p.m., Ex-Cop Takes Stage to Cheers: A former police officer from Voronezh named Roman Khabarov took the stage, drawing enthusiastic applause from the crowd, who shouted, “Way to go!” (“Molodets!”), Slon.ru reported. He said he came to the Moscow rally because the authorities in Voronezh, a city of almost 1 million people located about 500 kilometers south of Moscow, had barred an opposition protest.

“Many current police officers ask me, 'When will the revolution be?' They don't understand that we aren't going to seize power violently. Police officers defend the law, not crooks,” Khabarov said.

3:32 p.m., Udaltsov, Nemtsov Handed Summons for Questioning; Udaltsov Proposes Protest

Oct. 7: On stage at the rally, police officers handed opposition leaders Sergei Udaltsov and Boris Nemtsov summons to appear for questioning at the Investigative Committee offices at 5 p.m. Tuesday, Interfax reported. On Monday, during a search of Udaltsov's apartment, investigators ordered him to appear for questioning at noon Tuesday, but Udaltsov came to the protest instead.

In a speech to the crowd at the rally, Udaltsov proposed a opposition protest be held Oct. 7, with a nationwide “political strike” beforehand. He also proposed a continuation of the round-the-clock protests that demonstrators held on Chistoprudny Bulvar and other areas of the city last month, saying protesters should demand the release of 13 activists who were arrested by police for their roles in violence that broke out at the May 6 “March of Millions” opposition event.

3:11 p.m., Ponomaryov, Nemtsov Speak at Rally; Kasyanov Booed: State Duma Deputy Ilya Ponomaryov of A Just Russia spoke to the crowd at Prospekt Akademika Sakharova, calling for “real organization,” Moscow Times correspondent Rachel Nielsen reported from the scene. Parnas co-leader Boris Nemtsov also spoke, as did another Parnas co-leader and former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov, who was met by boos from the crowd.

Meanwhile, the head of the Moscow police's public chamber told Interfax that the protest was well-organized and being well-run.

Below, a photograph from the stage at the rally, via the Twitter account of activist Alyona Popova:



2:45 p.m., Rally Started Early; Udaltsov Estimates Crowd at 100,000 People: The rally at Prospekt Akademika Sakharaova started around 2:30 p.m., one half hour earlier than had originally been planned, Moscow Times correspondent Rachel Nielsen reported from the scene. Left Front leader Sergei Udaltsov was the first to speak, saying he estimated that more than 100,000 people were in attendance at the event. State Duma Deputy Dmitry Gudkov of A Just Russia was the next to step to the microphone.

A police helicopter has been hovering over the stage since protesters arrived to the rally site.

2:34 p.m., Crowd Massing at Rally Site: Protesters are gathering at Prospekt Akademika Sakharaova, where a rally is set to be held from 3 to 6 p.m. A stage at the far end of the street is set up, with the slogans “Russia will be free!” and “For honest authorities!” written along the top and side, according to a photo posted on Twitter by Kommersant-FM reporter Nikita Batalov.

Opposition leaders Sergei Udaltsov, Yevgenia Chirikova, Boris Nemtsov and Dmitry Gudkov are on stage, tweeted Anna Veduta, spokeswoman for anti-corruption lawyer Alexei Navalny.

After a forecast of thunderstorms in Moscow, the sun has come out at the rally site and people

are using umbrellas as parasols, Moscow Times reporter Rachel Niselen reported from the scene.

2:23 p.m., Organizer Says 50,000 People in Attendance; Police Estimate 18,000: Member of the liberal Solidarity movement and protest co-organizer Sergei Davidis said he thought there were no fewer than 50,000 people at the demonstration, Interfax reported. Police estimated the crowd size at 2 p.m. to be 18,000 people, the news agency said.

Police and protest organizers have at demonstrations in recent months diverged in their estimates of the crowd size by tens of thousands of people.

Davidis said he had not heard of any major incidents taking place and that police were maintaining order.

2:16 p.m., Farcical Tickets to Police Vans on Sale: Fake paper tickets for entry to police vans are being sold as jokes for 146 rubles, in reference to the miscounted 146 percent voter turnout in one region in the December parliamentary elections that became the subject of ridicule by the opposition. The tickets, similar in appearance to former bus tickets, have the words “People against crooks and thieves” and “ticket — police van” and a picture of a police truck, according to a photograph posted by blogger Rustem Adagamov on Ridus.ru.

Police have detained hundreds of protesters at opposition events since December, carting them to police stations in vans known in Russian as “avtozaki.”

1:58 p.m., Opposition Leaders in Attendance: Environmental activist Yevgenia Chirikova and State Duma Deputy Dmitry Gudkov of A Just Russia are among those in the crowd. Kommersant-FM reporter Uliana Malashenko posted a photo on Twitter of a smiling Gudkov standing next to two blonde-haired women dressed in white holding white flowers. Left Front leader Sergei Udaltsov is also in attendance (photo, by Anton Belitsky / Ridus.ru, below).

Alexei Navalny, Ilya Yashin and Kseniya Sobchak have not been reported to be in the crowd. They were scheduled to be questioned by investigators today at noon in connection with violence that erupted at the May 6 “March of Millions” opposition event.



1:46 p.m., A Trail of Demonstrators: Anna Veduta, spokeswoman for opposition leader Alexei Navalny, posted this photo from Rozhdestvensky Bulvar of part of the mass of protesters:



1:42 p.m., Protester Interacts With Police: One of the things observers are looking out for today is whether there will be violence between protesters and police officers as there was at the last “March of Millions” on May 6 that ended at Bolotnaya Ploshchad. So far, no incidents

of violence have been reported by the major news agencies or on Twitter by bloggers and reporters present at the event.

One elderly demonstrator dressed in white, the color of the opposition, stopped to speak with police officers, trying to convince them to “come over to the side of the people,” Kommersant-FM reporter Uliana Malashenko wrote on Twitter. The officers laughed in response.

1:28 p.m., Police Estimate Crowd at 10,000 People; Ekho Mosky Website Down: Moscow police have estimated the number of demonstrators at 10,000, Kommersant-FM reported on Twitter. Earlier, event co-organizer Sergei Davidis said he thought up to 20,000 people were present in the crowd.

Meanwhile, the website of liberal radio station Ekho Moskvyy underwent a distributed denial-of-service attack, Ekho Moskvyy reporter Vladimir Varfalomeyev wrote on Twitter. The website of Dozhd TV was attacked earlier today.

1:18 p.m., 'Russia Day Without Putin': Demonstrators have arrived bearing colorful and occasionally humorous signs, as at previous opposition events. One sign held by a pair of protesters spread between two poles read, "#partyofcats ^_^" ("#partiyakotikov ^_^"), according to a photograph posted on Twitter by blogger Dmitry Ternovsky. Another, below, read, "Russia Day Without Putin," referring to the national holiday today marking Russia's independence following the dissolution of the Soviet Union (photograph by Anton Belitsky / Ridus.ru):



1:10 p.m., Demonstrators Cheer as March Begins: The march began on schedule around 1 p.m., prompting cheers from the crowd, with members of leftist group Solidarity leading the way, Moscow Times journalist Rachel Nielsen reported from the scene. Demonstrators yelled “Putin is a thief” and “We are the power here” — mainstay chants at the opposition events of

recent months — as well as the less-often heard “Putin, go to Magadan,” referring to the infamous Far East prison camp.

12:58 p.m., Organizer Says Up to 20,000 People So Far: Between 10,000 and 20,000 people were in attendance at the opposition march at 12:40 p.m., Solidarity member and event co-organizer Sergei Davidis estimated, Interfax reported. Davidis said a long line had formed at metal detectors through which demonstrators must pass to enter the event.

12:54 p.m., Website of Opposition TV Channel Attacked: The website of liberal-leaning television channel Dozhd underwent a distributed denial-of-service attack Tuesday morning beginning around 11 a.m., making it unavailable, channel editor Mikhail Zygar told Interfax.

The websites of privately owned news outlets, including Ekho Moskvyy radio and Kommersant, have suffered DDos attacks in recent months on the days of major opposition protests, including on May 6, the date of the last so-called “March of Millions.”

12:43 p.m., Protesters Ready to March; First Chants of 'Russia Without Putin': Demonstrators have been herded by police east on Strastnoi Bulvar to that street's intersection with Ulitsa Petrovka and are waiting to begin the march, set to start at 1 p.m., Moscow Times journalist Rachel Nielsen reports from the scene. Protesters chanted for the first time today a now traditional opposition rallying cry of "Russia without Putin!"

A photograph of waiting demonstrator (by Rachel Nielsen / MT):



12:37 p.m., Udaltsov Has Arrived; Nationalists, Leftists in Attendance: Opposition leader Sergei Udaltsov has come to Pushkin Square for the protest, Interfax reported. The Investigative Committee asked Udaltsov to appear for questioning at noon Tuesday. Opposition lawyer Nikolai Polozov told the news agency that Udaltsov, as one of the applicants to City Hall to hold the event, was responsible for ensuring safety.

A contingent from leftist opposition group Solidarity is in attendance, with their orange and black flags, Moscow Times journalist Rachel Nielsen reported from the scene. In many times larger numbers are nationalist groups, many of them carrying black, yellow and white imperial Russian flags, one of which measures about a quarter of a city block in length. The nationalists are carrying banners, including those with the slogans “Moscow is an Ethnically Russian City,” (“Moskva — Russky Gorod” and “You Cannot Ban Russians!!!” (“Russkikh ne zapretit!!!”).

Nationalist groups have attended past opposition events in large numbers.

12:16 p.m., Protesters Gathering at Pushkin Square; Rain Has Begun: Hundreds of opposition protesters have gathered around Pushkin Square in preparation for the march, set to begin at 1 p.m., Moscow Times reporter Rachel Nielsen reported from the square.

It has begun raining at Pushkin Square; some demonstrators came prepared with umbrellas, while others took shelter under trees. Heavy thunderstorms are forecast for Tuesday, prompting New Yorker correspondent Julia Ioffe to quip on Twitter: "Gathering storm threatens to turn pro-democracy march into wet t-shirt contest."

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