

# Gennady Gudkov Says He'd Make Own Party

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Gennady Gudkov, left, Ilya Ponomaryov, center, and Dmitry Gudkov delivering a news conference Thursday. **Alexander Zemlianichenko**

A day after the Just Russia party ousted two of its most prominent members, Gennady Gudkov and his son, Dmitry, the elder Gudkov said Thursday that he would create a new social democratic party if A Just Russia does not take them back.

Ten of A Just Russia's 12 leadership council members voted late Wednesday to dismiss the Gudkovs, the party's most high-profile members and active participants of the protest movement, alleging that their membership in the opposition's Coordination Council had damaged the party's image.

"We will address the party's congress, to be held next fall, with a request to return to its previous political line, but if the party does not support us, we will create our own party and seek support from Just Russia members who share leftist ideas," Gennady Gudkov said

at a news conference.

In January, A Just Russia told the Gudkovs, as well as fellow member Oleg Shein, that they must quit the Coordination Council or leave the party, after they took part in one of the largest rallies to oppose a ban on U.S. adoptions. The party also told another opposition-minded member, Ilya Ponomaryov, that he must relinquish his leadership role in the Left Front movement.

Shein and Ponomaryov said they would remain in the party, while Gennady and Dmitry Gudkov said they wanted to maintain their membership in the Coordination Council as well as in the Just Party.

Dmitry Gudkov said they were satisfying their principles, not the council or the party. "The Coordination Council's program fully coincides with Just Russia leader Sergei Mironov's program when he was a candidate for president," he said.

Ponomaryov said he was deeply disappointed by the party's decision, which is why he would suspend his membership until the fall. For now, he said, he would start to create an inter-faction State Duma group called "Alternative," which would unite members of all Duma-represented parties.

"I don't want to split the existing factions but rather combine people who can think independently and who will oppose the Duma's conservative stance, even if we may have different views on economic or social issues," Ponomaryov said.

Just Russia head Nikolai Levichev told Interfax that he considered Ponomaryov's decision as quitting the party. "The party could give Ponomaryov's mandate to a candidate who continues to pursue the party's policy even in a changing political environment," he said.

Gennady Gudkov said the party's decision was a result of compromise with the Kremlin, which doesn't want any opposition-minded deputies in the Duma. "I'm aware of those consultations that were held in the Kremlin recently," Gennady Gudkov said.

Dmitry Gudkov added that for the last year, the state increased financing of the party significantly, and now it did not need any additional sources of financing.

The party's line has been changing for the last year as well. At the latest presidential elections Mironov said that in case he would become the president, he would dissolve the Duma, which was the main demand of the protest rallies since December 2011.

But later, the party voted favorably for all United Russia initiatives, including the adoption ban.

"The party's decision showed that the party was ready to betray its members; this decision raises the question of whether the party will remain an independent political player," Ponomaryov said.

Dmitry Gudkov said he wanted to remain a Duma deputy and a member of the Just Russia faction. Since I was chosen to the opposition council, I became a sort of a representative of the council in the Duma, he said.

"I've introduced several bills that we created together with Alexei Navalny, and now we're working on a new Electoral Code that I will also introduce in the Duma," he said.

Duma Vice Speaker Sergei Zheleznyak, a United Russia member, said the Gudkovs would be kicked out of the Coordination Council as well.

"I think the street opposition will need the Gudkovs less and less: Without belonging to a parliamentary party their opportunity to use its resources for lobbying the protest movement's projects is zero," he said in comments carried by Komsomolskaya Pravda.

Gennady Gudkov was excluded from the Duma last fall after he was accused of engaging in business activity, which is unlawful for Duma deputies. He said work on creation of the new party would start shortly, and if the decision about its creation is made, its first congress could be held on Nov. 7.

"Of course, Just Russia could be a good base for the new party but only in case it would be reformed," Dmitry Gudkov said.

His father emphasized that since December 2011, A Just Russia has lost half of his members around the country, which demonstrated that the party was falling apart.

"But we have to give one more chance to social democracy. Yesterday, the party missed that chance," Gennady Gudkov said.

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