

Putin Agrees on Amnesty in Honor of Constitution Anniversary

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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NOVO-OGARYOVO — President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday expressed his support for granting amnesty to perhaps tens of thousands of Russian prisoners in honor of the 20th anniversary of the country's constitution.

"I agree with your proposals in general," Putin told the head of the Kremlin's Human Rights Council, which had suggested the amnesty.

"We are going to improve this document together with federal lawmakers, and I ask you to actively engage in this process," Putin told council head Mikhail Fedotov.

According to various estimates, the number of people who could be released ranges from 50,000 to 100,000.

Fedotov told journalists after the meeting that prisoners convicted in high-profile cases, such

as former oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky and punk protesters Pussy Riot, might be eligible.

Presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that it was too early to speak about who might be released, and that any speculations of this kind would be "hasty and inappropriate."

The council also proposed that the amnesty be extended to labor migrants, giving those illegally employed a chance to officially register and obtain a work permit without facing fines, deportation or other administrative sanctions.

Peskov said the president himself would soon forward the proposal to the State Duma, the lower chamber of the Russian parliament.

Pavel Krasheninnikov, a senior lawmaker who heads the Duma's criminal legislation committee, said the chamber was set to pass the amnesty bill by the end of the year.

"Eleven amnesty bills have already been submitted to the State Duma for consideration. This [the Kremlin council's proposal] will be the 12th. Of course, we will try to consider them as soon as possible, before the New Year [holidays]," the lawmaker said.

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