

Moscow City Hall Denies Permit for Rally Against Anti-Terror Laws

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Moscow City Hall has refused to give permission for a rally against the infamous anti-terror legislation “the Yarovaya package,” organizer Leonid Volkov wrote on Twitter Monday. Volkov, an ally of the opposition leader Alexei Navalny, said that city authorities had claimed that the spot for the rally was already booked for another event.

The area had been approved for the rally earlier this month, but Moscow officials later revoked the permit, citing inaccuracies on the application form. Volkov and other activists were then rejected after applying for a second time. The group moved to sue City Hall over the issue last week, with the court expected to rule on the suit on Monday. “I can't even imagine which laws they haven't violated [by rejecting the application and not offering an alternative location],” Volkov wrote on Facebook.

The politician also claimed that an official from the Human Rights Ombudsman's office had called him to condemn the actions of City Hall as “illegal” and “appalling.” Volkov was

assured that the Ombudsman's office was monitoring the situation and is planning to contact City Hall and the Interior Ministry in order to force them to issue the permit, he said.

The protest is against a controversial series of hard-hitting anti-terrorism laws that were passed by the Russian State Duma and signed by president Vladimir Putin this summer. Ultraconservative United Russia lawmaker Irina Yarovaya submitted the bills alongside Federation Council member Viktor Ozerov.

The changes to existing legislation will tighten restrictions on Russians suspected of committing terrorist and extremist activities. The proposals are wide-ranging and include harsher penalties for inciting or justifying terrorism online, requiring parcels to be checked for illegal items and increasing the number of crimes with which children aged between 14 and 17 can be charged.

Communications companies will also see a crackdown, with the new laws requiring them to monitor the content of phone calls and messages and to keep them on file for six months. All messaging apps which use encryption will also be required to add additional code allowing access to the Russian security services.

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