

Moscow Police Raid, Interrogate Opposition Politicians Ahead of Election rally

July 25, 2019



Pavel Golovkin / AP / TASS

Moscow police raided the homes of opposition candidates and carried out sweeping interrogations on Wednesday night, days before a planned protest calling for fair elections.

Opposition candidates have organized near-daily protests in central Moscow over the past week after being barred from participating in local elections next September. Election officials say the candidates failed to garner enough signatures from voters to qualify. The candidates, in turn, have rejected the allegations and say they were barred from participating for their independent views.

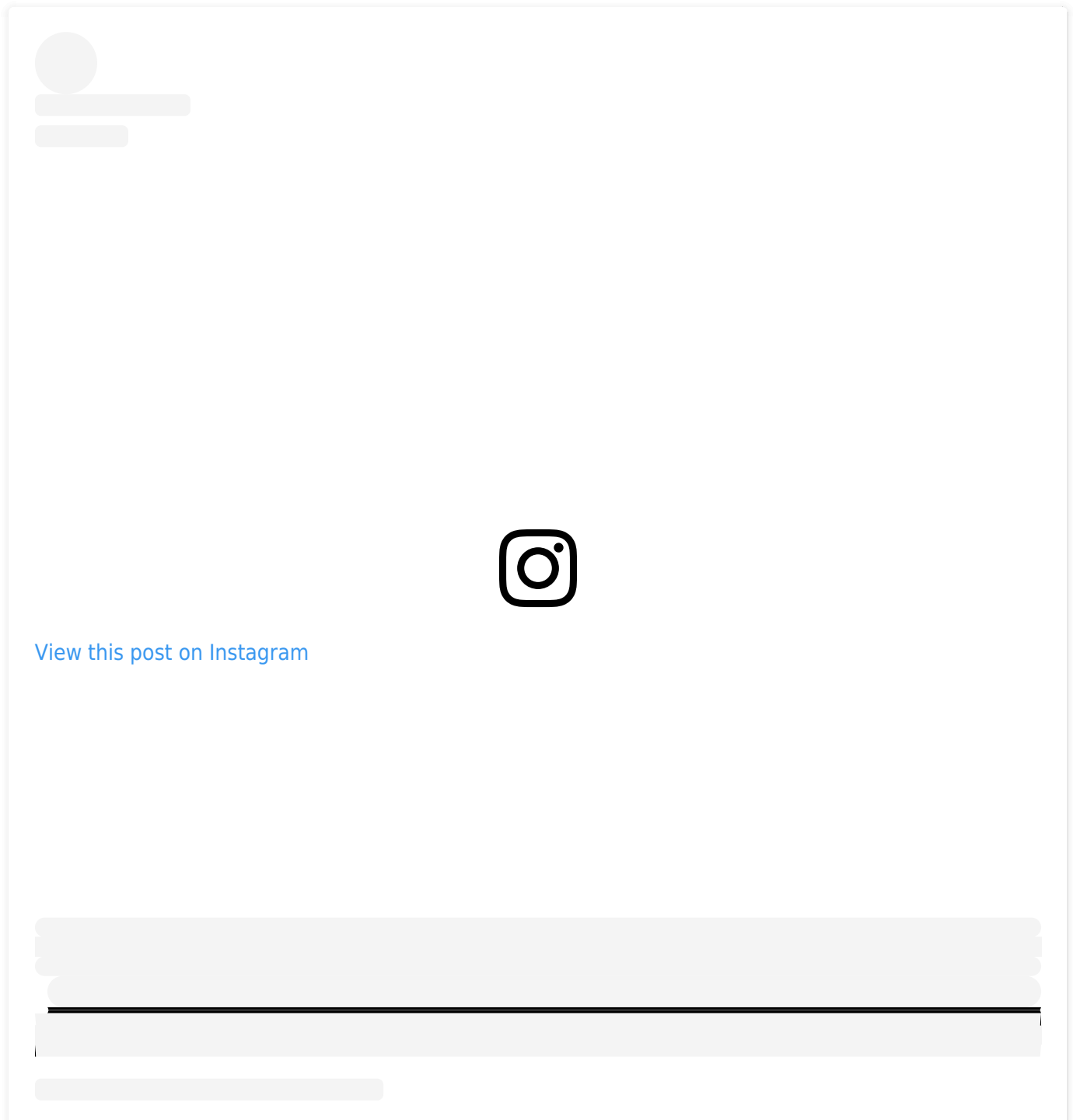
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In the early hours of Thursday, police [raided](#) four of the Moscow City Duma opposition candidates' homes and summoned several others to appear for questioning.

Lyubov Sobol, one of the candidates who was barred from the ballot, said she [refused](#) to appear for questioning after receiving a call on Wednesday night from investigators. Anti-corruption activist Ivan Zhdanov was reportedly taken to a night interrogation at the Investigative Committee, where he refused to answer questions, invoking a constitutional right to not testify against oneself.

Meanwhile, opposition politician Dmitry Gudkov said police seized several computers and flash drives during a raid of his apartment on Wednesday.

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Hours before the raids, opposition politician Alexei Navalny was sentenced to 30 days for calling for an unauthorized rally this Saturday. Police also [sentenced](#) four other opposition activists to varying jail terms.

Activists say the raids may be related to a new criminal case by Russia's Investigative Committee, which [alleges](#) that “members of one movement” pressured and “threatened violence” against election officials at unsanctioned rallies this month.

A rally last Saturday calling for opposition candidates to be allowed on the ballot gathered 20,000 protesters in central Moscow.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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