

Nearly 50,000 Protest for Fair Elections in Moscow

By [Reuters](#)

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Pjotr Sauer / MT

Nearly 50,000 Russian opposition activists and their supporters have taken to Moscow's streets for a fifth consecutive weekend in spite of a government crackdown as support from citizens and celebrities grows across the country.

The protests, which demand that Moscow authorities allow independent candidates to appear on the ballot in the city's upcoming elections, have been the largest wave of demonstrations in Russia since 2011-2012. Independent polling this week [said](#) that Moscow residents are more likely to support the protests than oppose them.

Embed:

☒☒A fantastic shot of the 40k pic.twitter.com/aL1rdn5J07

At least 49,900 people have gathered at the authorized protest on Prospekt Sakharov so far, the White Counter crowd-monitoring NGO [said](#).

The rally included performances by the techno duo IC3PEAK and the popular rapper Face. Moscow City Hall had barred the musical performers but organizers [said](#) the acts would still take the stage.

Ahead of Saturday's protest, masked police searched an office used by opposition activist Lyubov Sobol and took her in for questioning, she wrote on Twitter.

"I won't make it to the protest. But you know what to do without me....Russia will be free!" Sobol said.

Eight people have been [detained](#) so far at the Moscow protest, the OVD-Info police-monitoring website said.

Related article: [What to Expect From Moscow Protests This Saturday](#)

Several other Russian cities, including St. Petersburg, are also staging pickets in solidarity with Moscow's opposition candidates. Eighty-six have been detained at the St. Petersburg rally and 11 were detained in Rostov-on-Don, OVD-Info said.

Russia's main election board on Wednesday [rejected](#) the appeals of several opposition politicians, including hunger-striking Sobol, to get back on the ballot.

In the days since, the opposition has vowed to continue staging protests — authorized or unauthorized — until the Sept. 8 City Duma election.

Russian celebrities like popular YouTuber Yury Dud and rapper Oxxxymiron announced they would attend today's event, calling on their millions of social media followers to join them.

Moscow police have detained more than 2,300 people at rallies this summer protesting the candidates' exclusion. While most of those detained were quickly released, authorities accused protesters of using violence against the police.

Investigators opened criminal proceedings against several people over what they have called mass civil unrest, an offense punishable with up to eight years in jail.

On Friday, senators in Russia's upper-house Federation Council [said](#) they will draft a bill to further restrict the locations where citizens will be allowed to protest.

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