

Putin-Appointed Governor Defies Calls to Leave Protest-Hit Russian Region

July 22, 2020



Mikhail Degtyaryov was appointed the Khabarovsk region's acting governor after the sudden arrest of former governor Sergei Furgal brought tens of thousands to the streets. **Khabarovsk Region Administration Press Office / TASS**

The new head of Russia's Far Eastern Khabarovsk region has refused calls by protesters to step down less than 48 hours after he replaced a popular governor who was arrested on murder charges.

President Vladimir Putin on Monday named Mikhail Degtyaryov, 39, the Khabarovsk region's acting governor after the sudden arrest of Sergei Furgal, 50, brought tens of thousands to the streets. Furgal's supporters gathered for the 10th consecutive day Tuesday and [demanded](#) that Degtyaryov, who unlike Furgal does not hail from the Far East, leave the region.

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"To all those who yell 'Leave, Degtyaryov': I won't leave," he [responded](#) on social media early

Wednesday.

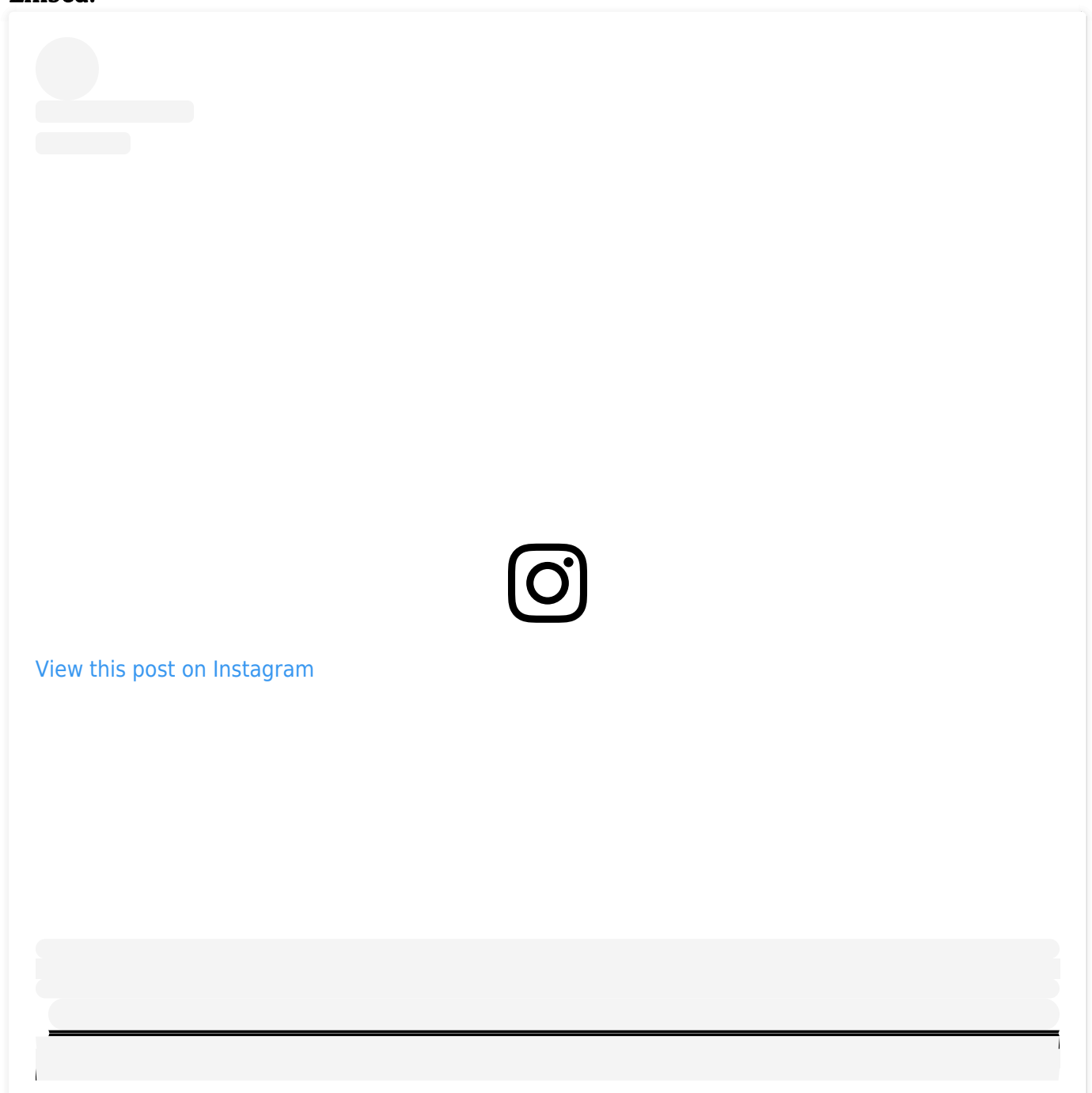
“Yelling ‘Come out Degtyaryov’ under my windows is bad manners,” he said in an Instagram live-stream.

On Tuesday, Degtyaryov urged protesters — who he said Wednesday were expressing “justified anger” over Furgal’s arrest — to avoid provoking the police. Degtyaryov said in the Instagram broadcast that he had worked with Furgal for nine years.

The Kremlin decree appointing Degtyaryov states that he will serve as acting governor until an election can be held next year.

Degtyaryov has promised to step down if the charges against Furgal are cleared.

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A post shared by Михаил Дегтярёв (@degtyarev_info) on Jul 21, 2020 at 5:15pm PDT

The largest pro-Furgal demonstrations drew tens of thousands over the last two Saturdays, with some estimates putting the size of the crowds at more than 50,000. Khabarovsk is located on the Chinese border and has a population of 600,000.

Investigators say Furgal organized the murders of several businessmen in the Far East in 2004 and 2005. Critics say the charges are politically motivated and have demanded that Furgal, who was flown to Moscow to stand trial, face the charges in Khabarovsk.

Both Degtyaryov and Furgal are from the Kremlin-friendly nationalist LDPR party.

Putin did not mention the protests in Khabarovsk when announcing Degtyaryov's appointment. He said Degtyaryov faced "a very demanding, very important" job in the region and needed to focus on helping the region's "very talented and active" residents.

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

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