



By: TA | AP Insight

No anti-war parties in Russia's parliamentary elections



Russia's highest court on Monday ordered the only party opposing the Kremlin's military action in Ukraine to be removed from the ballot in next month's parliamentary election.

The Supreme Court annulled the registration of Yabloko — which is Russian for “apple” — after an appeal from a pro-Kremlin party.

Last month, the Central Election Commission had initially allowed Yabloko on the ballot along with 10 other parties.

Once a leading liberal voice in parliament and often critical of the government, Yabloko later lost its bloc of seats in the State Duma as the **Kremlin tightened its grip** on Russian politics.

In recent years, Yabloko was the only registered opposition party that opposed sending troops into Ukraine.

Its campaign slogans included “For a ceasefire agreement, diplomacy and peace!” “Our goal is to prevent nuclear war!” and “For a Russia free from fear and political repressions!”

Veteran liberal politician Grigory Yavlinsky, who co-founded Yabloko in the 1990s and chairs its political committee, deplored the ruling and said the party would appeal it.

“Barring Yabloko from the election means a refusal to engage in dialogue with those who ask questions that make the authorities uncomfortable,” Yavlinsky said in an online statement. “We hope the authorities will heed the public demand for peace, freedom, and life without fear, and change their policy.”

Yabloko's platform draws strong support

Many **Russian opposition** figures in exile had urged voters to back Yabloko, including Yulia Navalnaya, the widow of Kremlin critic **Alexei Navalny**, and politicians Ilya Yashin and Vladimir Kara-Murza.

“I believe it's morally and politically right to

support the Yabloko party,” Navalnaya said in an Aug. 6 statement on Telegram, noting the party's anti-war stance.

Yabloko chairman Nikolai Rybakov, who was in the courtroom Monday, sought to distance the party from what he described as unwarranted support from Navalnaya and other Kremlin foes living abroad in an apparent attempt to prevent its removal from the ballot.

In the meantime, social media buzzed with videos supporting Yabloko. Many didn't contain political slogans but instead showed young men and women holding apples when asked their voting preference for the Sept. 18-20 election or dancing to Russian songs that referenced apples.

Rybakov told the court the party wasn't paying for the videos, saying that people who posted it were backing Yabloko “simply because they want to live in Russia and don't want to get killed.”

Kicking the party off the ballot is effectively demonstrating that they're afraid of what Yabloko stands for - Nikolay Petrov

The authorities likely initially allowed Yabloko on the ballot to give Russians an outlet for their discontent while also showing, through the party's traditionally low vote count, that few people support its stand on Ukraine, said Nikolay Petrov, senior research fellow at the NEST Centre, founded by exiled Russian tycoon and opposition figure Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

But Yabloko's campaign for peace struck a chord and upended the Kremlin's calculations.

Now “the Kremlin is facing a rather difficult task, to come out of the situation with minimal losses,” Petrov said, because kicking the party off the ballot is effectively “demonstrating that they're afraid of what Yabloko stands for.”

Yavlinsky said the court's ruling “speaks volumes about the importance of our platform

— far more than any official election results ever could.”

He added that “the public demand for peace and freedom today has proven far stronger than the authorities anticipated.”

Kremlin-aligned parties bash Yabloko

Several Kremlin-aligned parties have assailed Yabloko for its stance on Ukraine, and some even urged authorities to investigate it.

Sergei Mironov, head of A Just Russia Party, called on the Prosecutor General’s Office and the Justice Ministry to “look closely” at Yabloko and “give a legal assessment to their actions.”

“A party that openly opposes the special military operation, promises a shameful peace, and supports foreign agents is running for the State Duma,” Mironov said, using the Kremlin’s term to describe the 4-year-old conflict.

**Yabloko is not supporting
President Vladimir Putin’s policies
- Gennady Zyuganov**

Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov said Yabloko is not supporting President Vladimir Putin’s policies and has not helped “those suffering, those fighting on the front line.”

The Motherland Party filed the lawsuit with the Supreme Court demanding Yabloko’s removal from the ballot. It accused Yabloko of copyright infringement and exceeding campaign spending limits.

The party also viewed Yabloko’s stance on Ukraine as unlawful and tantamount to calling for the violation of Russia’s territorial integrity.

Rybakov and lawyers representing the party in the Supreme Court on Monday rejected the accusations.

A crowd of supporters greeted Rybakov and other Yabloko representatives with applause as they entered the courthouse in central Moscow.

Yabloko members faced a Kremlin crackdown

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Several prominent Yabloko members were jailed or designated as “foreign agents” — a label that brings additional government scrutiny and aims to discredit the recipient. As a result, its most prominent members were not on the ticket.

Maxim Kruglov, a deputy chairman and former member of the Moscow city council, was convicted in June of spreading false information about the Russian army and sentenced to seven years in prison.

Another senior member of the party, Lev Shlosberg, is on trial for similar charges in his native city of Pskov, facing up to 10 years in prison if convicted.

It’s the third criminal case brought against Shlosberg in the last two years. He has also been designated a “foreign agent.”

That designation was also slapped on Boris Vishnevsky, another Yabloko deputy chairman, in 2024. The designation forced Vishnevsky to step down from the St. Petersburg city council after legislation was adopted later that year, barring “foreign agents” from participating in elections or holding public office.