



RUSSIA REFORM MONITOR

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Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; SPACE; NASA; Russia

RUSSIA'S NEW CLIMATE STRATEGY: LESS THAN MEETS THE EYE

In a recent draft strategy, Russia's Economic Development Ministry has outlined a series of options for addressing its climate goals amid rising greenhouse gas emissions. The document, which has been leaked to the Russian media, outlines four potential pathways for the Russian government: inertial, basic, intensive and aggressive. Of them, all but the "inertial" approach is believed to be capable of meeting President Vladimir Putin's desired goal - which is not to hit "net zero" carbon emissions by 2050, but simply to drop Russia's annual totals below those of the European Union by then.

Russia is already the world's fourth largest carbon emitter, producing 2.12 billion tons of CO₂ in 2019, as compared to the EU's 3.8 billion the same year. The "basic" plan, Russian news sources say, is the one most in line with Russia's current development strategy, which will see its emissions rise a further 8.2% (to 2.29 billion tons) by 2050 as a result of increases in every industry except for transportation and utilities. To offset these increases, the draft strategy lays out, Russia will rely on "natural carbon capture" from its vast swathes of forests to bring down its CO₂ levels - in effect, expecting nature to mitigate the effects while continuing its current trajectory of industrial growth. (*The Moscow Times*, August 27, 2021)

NAVALNY ALLY POLITICALLY INTIMIDATED, REMOVED FROM BALLOT

A prospective LGBTQ candidate for the Murmansk city council has been barred from participating in the upcoming Russian elections because of her affiliation with jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny - although the smear and intimidation campaign against her began well before the Kremlin's recent crackdown on Navalny's followers. Shortly after Violetta Grudina - who once ran a campaign office for Navalny - announced that she herself would run for Murmansk City Council back in April, leaflets accusing her of encouraging homosexuality among children began appearing near her office. Next, her office space was vandalized and defaced overnight. Then Grudina was ordered into hospital care for nearly three weeks for allegedly violating COVID-19 quarantine protocols during the election candidate registration period, and finally prevented from having her name included in the list of eligible candidates.

"It was a scare campaign, an intimidation campaign - the public steamrolling of an opposition candidate so people never even think of taking part in politics out of fear of the repressions I've faced," Grudina has told the Reuters news agency. Local, regional, and national authorities have all declined to comment on her case. (Reuters, August 31, 2021)

JOURNALIST: PUTIN'S REGIME HAS ENTERED SURVIVAL MODE

Earlier this year, Roman Badanin, the chief editor of Russian news site *Proekt*, was personally branded a foreign agent under Russian law and his outlet an "undesirable organization" because it is registered in the United States. In the months since, Badanin has fled the country and his family and children are under surveillance by state security in Moscow. The move against Badanin and *Proekt* was part of a major crackdown on independent media across Russia - one that has targeted other outlets such as *Meduza* and *Dozhd TV* as well. But, Badanin believes, it reflects weakness rather than strength on the part of the Kremlin. According to him, "Putin's regime has entered survival mode: Everyone who has challenged his right to rule Russia will be declared an enemy, expelled from the country, thrown into prison or killed." Under these conditions, independent journalism represents a threat to the Russian government that needs to be suppressed. (*Washington Post*, September 1, 2021)

HOMOPHOBIA ON STAGE

During an anniversary celebration at a theater in Yaroslavl late last month, cadets from the local paratrooper military club took to the stage and simulated violence against gays by using a sledgehammer to smash a concrete block inscribed with the phrase "death to gays" (a slur was used in place of "gays"). The stunt drew a mixed reaction from the audience and organizers. The head of the club, Andrei Palachev, gave his endorsement of the antics, while the theater organizer voiced his surprise and displeasure. "It wasn't preplanned or agreed upon because they knew we wouldn't allow it," he said.

The incident reflects a broader trend. Negative attitudes toward the country's LGBTQ community have steadily worsened since Moscow passed its "gay propaganda" law - which bans the "promotion of nontraditional sexual relations to minors" - in 2013. Earlier this summer, grocery store chain *VkusVill* removed an ad featuring a same-sex couple due to pressure from conservative Russian groups. (*Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, September 1, 2021)

IS RUSSIA WALKING AWAY FROM THE ISS?

Back in June, Russia's Space Chief, Dmitri Rogozin, delivered blistering remarks to the country's State Duma regarding the Kremlin's intention to end cooperation with NASA and pull out of the International Space Station (ISS) in favor of a future space station project of Russia's own. In a recent interview with *CNN*, however, Rogozin partially walked back those comments. "I think there is a problem in interpretation," he claimed. "I, most likely, did not say that." What is clear, however, is that Moscow is angling for a more preferential position in space vis-a-vis the United States. According to Rogozin, "we request dignified conditions from NASA. We don't want to be assistants or servants." (*CNN*, September 2, 2021)