

Russia: Mikhail Lobanov: Why Police Raided My Home

Monday 16 January 2023, by [LOBANOV Mikhail](#) (Date first published: 9 January 2023).

Why did the police [raid](#) my home?

The formal reason — as follows from the court ruling and what people from pro-Kremlin media have heard — is a fictitious “connection” between me and ex-State Duma deputy [Ilya Ponomarev](#). This is a product of the meager imagination of the security forces. I have not interacted with Ponomarev in any way, either in 2022 or in previous years, neither personally, nor through other people.

Why did the authorities have to intimidate me? I have two possible explanations.

The first and most likely explanation is that Moscow City Hall was behind the raid.

The following facts speak in favor of this explanation.

1. PR support. [The Telegram channel] [Kremlin Laundress](#), which published posts containing threats and attempts to denigrate me (including a week before the raid), is a “drain tank” for the mayor’s office. The secretary of the Communist Party City Committee told me about this more than a year ago: they had been watching [the channel] for a long time and had come to this conclusion.
2. There was no investigator present during the raid. The field agents who were on hand, having unenthusiastically asked me two questions at the outset — whether I was connected with Ponomarev, and whether I had delegated [\[Vladimir\] Zolishchak](#) and [\[Sergei\] Tsukasov](#) to some [congress](#) — did not return to this topic during the six hours we spent together. But they did spend a great deal of time trying to persuade me that I should not be involved in politics by making threats (while drawing parallels with [\[Ilya\] Yashin](#) and [\[Yulia\] Galyamina](#)) and giving me “friendly” advice.
3. The mayor [of Moscow, Sergei Sobyanin] will run for re-election later this year, and his “victory” may further delegitimize the regime. In 2021–2022, my name was inextricably linked with the most successful opposition election campaigns in Moscow. Teams of like-minded people formed around me during both the municipal and the parliamentary elections. By mobilizing the enthusiasm of thousands of dynamic people, we defeated United Russia and corporate candidates. Political spin doctors and administrative resources were powerless against us. By accumulating the support of ordinary people, we achieved greater results than did candidates with exponentially larger campaign coffers.

Yes, our victories were stolen [through [rigging](#)] [online voting](#). But even today, unbowed people can together find a way to use the mayor’s re-election campaign to organize themselves and make his “re-election” problematic.

For some reason, the Kremlin’s foreign policy “successes” in 2022 have not had the effect that the people who allocate tens of billions to state propaganda wanted. If the protest-minded segment of

the electorate is mobilized in a minimal way, the construction business and ruling class candidate will enjoy only a Pyrrhic victory, one based on flagrant vote rigging.

A second possible explanation is that the raid on my home and my arrest are part of preparations to transfer power to puppet ultra-right revanchists.

In this case, what is happening to me reflects the fear of people with a consistent democratic anti-war stance on the part of officials, siloviki, and the oligarchs who have fused with them. We are trying to develop real trade unions and push the topic of blatant economic inequality onto the agenda.

After the ruling group's collapse, the far-right revanchists will try to play the card of virtual "angry patriots" and maintain the existing system of domination. If they succeed, there will be a new dictator, increased crackdowns, a new round of spending on "security," funded by a shrinking budget and, in the medium term, another senseless war.

But I believe that there are many dynamic people in Russian society who will be able to formulate a convincing left-democratic alternative and inspire tens of millions of other people. I look to the future with hope.

Mikhail Lobanov

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