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Mikhail Lobanov, Prominent Russian Leftist, Flees Russia & Calls for Strategic Organizing

Wednesday 16 August 2023, by [LOBANOV Mikhail](#) (Date first published: 12 July 2023).

Lobanov outlines a two-pronged strategy for creating a mass political structure aimed at transforming the current Russian regime, while working with progressive political forces in other countries to form a set of proposals and guarantees for ordinary people in Russia and Ukraine. A way out that is favorable to the peoples of Ukraine, Russia, Europe, and all those involved.

Prominent left-wing politician and trade union activist, [Mikhail Lobanov](#), has fled Russia only hours after he was fired from Moscow State University's Faculty of Mechanics and Mathematics.

"Our team made a decision: I am going on a long-term trip abroad," the activist wrote on the [Telegram](#) messaging app on July 10, adding that he was already in a place "where Russian security forces cannot break in."

"I have repeatedly said that I consider it important to stay in Russia as long as there is an opportunity to continue creative political activity," he told The [Moscow Times](#).

"Now, for me personally, this opportunity has been temporarily exhausted. Obviously, the next and final step would soon be some kind of fictional criminal case and putting me in jail. And until that moment, the life of me and my wife would have been reduced to a struggle for survival, in which there would no longer be time for political participation."

Lobanov plans to continue his activist work outside of Russia. He continues to call for international negotiations for peace that would generate a way out that is, "favorable to the peoples of Ukraine, Russia, Europe, and all those involved". He has also been vocal about the lack of representation and participation options for Russians who would oppose the war, authoritarianism, and neoliberalism and about the need for creating a mass political (grassroots) structure aimed at transforming the current regime.

According to Lobanov, Russian civil society is not defeated. He proposes a two-pronged strategy of national grassroots organizing and international organizing.

(Translation by [Sergey Voronin](#) & [Alexandria Shaner](#) for [ZNetwork.org](#). The original Russian text can be read [here](#).)

Mikhail Lobanov, July 10, 2023:

An important stage of the struggle begins. I'll tell you about our plans.

From this moment on, I will be involved in work in two directions. The first is creating a mass political structure aimed at transforming the current regime. The second is to work with progressive

political forces in other countries to form a set of proposals and guarantees for ordinary people in Russia and Ukraine. Working on something that would allow us all to see a way out of the catastrophe triggered by the Kremlin. A way out that is favorable to the peoples of Ukraine, Russia, Europe, and all those involved.

Below I will elaborate on why this is important, why I see the value in my participation, and how it will affect my daily life...

Assigning the "foreign agent" status to me, a ban on my profession and my illegal dismissal from Moscow State University are only the latest steps in the campaign that the authorities have been waging against me for a year now. Their main task is to eliminate me from political life, and along the way, to intimidate the active part of society.

From the very beginning, it was clear that dodging the pressure would not work. That this would end either with a fabricated criminal case and arrest, or with a forced departure abroad.

We made a conscious decision to resist this pressure for as long as possible, as long as it was compatible with our creative activity. It was important for us to understand ourselves and demonstrate to the whole world that the Kremlin failed to kill Russian society and our request for collective participation.

Our goal has been reached. There is no longer any doubt that the Kremlin's bet on the death of civil society inside Russia has failed. At the same time, the repertoire of the security forces in terms of warnings and bringing trouble has actually been exhausted over this year. Their next step is to bring a fictional criminal case against me and to hold me in jail (pre-trial detention centre).

Naturally, we have a plan (international solidarity campaign) in case I were to end up in jail. But in parallel, throughout the year we discussed with like-minded people what political goals are achievable when moving abroad.

We have a clear understanding that today's forced emigration from Russia, unfortunately, is not yet able to solve two major political problems. The first is the formation of a mass political force focused on direct participation in the transformation of the Russian regime and on supporting social movements within the country. The second is to work with progressive political forces in other countries in order to form a set of proposals and guarantees for ordinary people in Russia and Ukraine. Working on something that would allow us all to see a way out of the catastrophe triggered by the Kremlin. A way out that is favorable to the peoples of Ukraine, Russia, Europe, and all those involved.

Why is there almost no progress in both of these two most important areas for a year and a half? Both failures are largely based on the same fundamental problem. In Russian public opposition politics, the mass demand of our society for social justice, for overcoming flagrant economic and political inequality is practically not represented.

The active part of society, to a large extent, stands on radical democratic positions. Therefore, we can hardly expect them to unite into any structures around neoliberal (whether right-wing or liberal) political figures who are too fond of hierarchies built by the market and who do not trust grassroots self-management.

On the other hand, almost everywhere in the world, political forces that, at least in theory, are capable of promoting some kind of international agenda in the interests of everyone, are represented by a wide range of left-wing parties and movements. And it is not easy for them to talk with politicians far removed from them in their views.

Naturally, it is unfair to make claims against Russian politicians in this regard. Everyone has the right to have and defend those views that they consider correct. All those who stand for an end to the senseless carnage deserve respect.

Under these conditions, the responsibility for solving the aforementioned two most important tasks falls on the few Russian left-wing politicians and intellectuals at the moment — apparently, only they are able to achieve a qualitative breakthrough.

All in all. Our team has made a decision: I'm going on a long-term trip abroad to try and get these things off the ground.

Thanks to everyone who was worried about my safety — now I already am somewhere the Russian security forces cannot break in.

This is the beginning of a big important stage in which we must find forms of participation for millions of residents of Russia.

Mikhail Lobanov

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