

**Russia probes social network chief over protests**

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The head of one of Russia's most popular social networks said Friday he had been called in for questioning by prosecutors after refusing to deny access to several opposition groups.

V Kontakte (In Contact) chief Pavel Durov -- whose Internet platform has been dubbed the Russian version of Facebook -- posted the request from prosecutors in the company's base Saint Petersburg on his Twitter account.

He also published what he said was a copy of a request from the FSB security service to block the network's access to seven forums used by the opposition to organise rallies against the outcome of disputed December 4 legislative polls.

V Kontakte has refused to shut down the Internet communities and a company spokesman told the Gazeta.ru website that Durov had not yet appeared for questioning or decided what to do next.

Social networks have turned into a powerful weapon for Russian opposition groups in recent weeks amid full state control of the three main television networks.

Opposition groups have used them to post videos of alleged ballot stuffing and other fraud in the elections and also rallied support for some of the biggest rallies against strongman Vladimir Putin in his 12-year rule.

The largest anti-Putin rally to date has been scheduled for Saturday when authorities have allowed up to 30,000 people to gather on a square across the river from the Kremlin at 2:00 pm (1000 GMT).

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