

Weekly Newsletter

The State Duma, lower house of Russian Parliament, on 22nd December, granted expanded immunity to the former Russian presidents. The bill signed by the Russian President, Vladimir Putin grants the former presidents of Russia immunity from prosecution. Once Presidents have left Kremlin, they and their families are immune from the prosecutions of crimes that they have committed in their life. The legislation exempts from police investigation, arrests or being searched. Before this legislation, Russian Presidents were immune to prosecutions for the crime that they committed, but only for the time they served as president. Even if the President now is accused of treason or grave crimes, and the Supreme Court has found him guilty, confirming the charges, the President will be immune from legal penalties and any kind of consequences. The bill that has now become a law, is a part of Russian constitutional amendments which were approved in summer and that allowed Putin to remain in power until 2036, when he will be 86 years old. This law was followed by the Russian constitutional amendments, which allows Putin to run for elections for another two terms, and allows him to remain in Presidential seat until 2036. He has been ruling Russia as a president since 2000. After this legislation, Presidents after they have left the office are no more prohibited to become Senators for life in Federation Council, the upper house of Russian Parliament. A position of the former Russian President in the Senate also comes with the expanded immunity. Apart from this legislation, the Russian Parliament has also passed a law that has made information about employees of Russian Judicial System, officers working for law enforcement agencies or with regulatory authorities and military personnel classified as confidential. These legislations required a sign from the Russian President, Putin, which is merely a formality. However, to revoke the protections that new law has given the

former presidents a supermajority of Russian lawmakers will be required. The immunity given to the presidents has played a significant role in Putin's rise to power. Putin previously granted immunity to a former president, Boris Yeltsin, from being interrogated, arrested or his house being searched by the police. The analysts in Russia have interpreted this decision of Putin as an incentive, to Yeltsin who stepped down from presidency and chose Putin as his successor. Although Yeltsin denies the rumors of having any deal with Putin in this regard. The previous law that granted presidential immunity was first time adopted by Russian Parliament in 2001. Other than Yeltsin, the only other former President who can enjoy the Presidential immunity is Dmitry Medvedev, who remained in office from 2008 till 2012, after which Putin was allowed to return back as President.