

Friday, February 5, 2021

Unprecedented wave of arrests and repression of journalists in Russia in ongoing Navalny protests

The AEJ has joined other concerned organisations CPJ, Article 19 and RSF in recording and protesting against the record wave of arrests, attacks and criminal cases against journalists for coverage of the mass protests over the arrest and jail sentence imposed on Alexei Navalny. The Russian authorities have not yet replied to the formal media freedom Alert on the Europe-wide Platform for the safety of journalists published by the Council of Europe.

The Alert and related information contained in the press freedom alert can be accessed here <https://go.coe.int/dgkxJ>

and, below, in full text.

Also, following the most recent protests on Wednesday, which resulted in many more detentions and assaults by riot police and other security forces, the London-based Justice for Journalists organisation reported that in total about 200 journalists were being held in detention across Russia, and 400 attacks had been recorded against Russian media workers and their families:

<https://mailchi.mp/d6bc9df46da4/unprecedented-repressions-against-russian-professional-and-citizen-journalists?e=6caafde778>

Alert on 3 February 2021, Russian Federation

Russian Police Detain or Harass more than 100 Journalists amid a New Wave of Pro-Navalny Protests
SOURCE OF THREAT State

CATEGORY Detention and imprisonment of journalists

PARTNER: CPJ Article 19 AEJ RSF

NO STATE REPLY YET

During nationwide protests by supporters of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny on 31 January, 2021, as well as in their immediate run-up, police throughout the country detained, intimidated, or harassed at least 122 journalists, according to news reports and a report by the Professional Union of Journalists and Media Workers, an independent trade group. In previous pro-Navalny protests on 23 January, the union reported about half as many such attacks.

On 30 January, police in Moscow detained Sergey Smirnov, chief editor of the independent human rights news website Mediazona; Ivan Yegorov, correspondent with the independent YouTube political news channel Another Opinion; and Artyom Kriger, a correspondent with the independent news website Sota.Vision. Police held Yegorov and Kriger briefly and then released them without charge, but charged Smirnov with illegally organising a protest on 23 January. Smirnov told CPJ that authorities accused him of repeated violations of the law on rallies and public events, but he said that he spent 23 January at home and did not organise or participate in any demonstrations that day. Police held him for about eight hours and then released him with a mandate that he return to court tomorrow for a hearing in his case, he said. If convicted of illegally organising a protest, he could face up to 30 days of arrest, according to Russian law. "It is so obvious to everyone that I am a journalist and not an organiser of the protests of 23 January, I have a hard time providing any comment on these charges at all. I think it is insane," Smirnov told CPJ.

Also on 30 January in Moscow, police issued written warnings against "participating in the unsanctioned protest action of 31 January" to Roman Dobrokhov, chief editor of the independent news outlet The Insider; Semyon Zakruzhny, a correspondent with the TV channel Pyatnitsa; Mariya Baronova, correspondent with the state-funded broadcaster Russia Today; Andrey Novichkov, correspondent for the news website Grani.ru; and correspondent Vladimir Romensky and

editor Daniil Sotnikov, both from the independent broadcaster Dozhd.

Police issued similar warnings on 30 January to journalists across Russia, including Timofey Yefremov, deputy editor and correspondent with the independent news website Yakutia.Info in the eastern Siberian city of Yakutsk; Maksim Karpikov, chief editor of the independent news outlet Nash Gorod in the western Siberian city of Tyumen; Maria Tokmakova, a correspondent with the independent news website 72.ru in Tyumen; Mstislav Pismenkov, a correspondent with the independent news website Znak, in Tyumen; and Aleksei Mazur, a correspondent with the independent news site Tayga.Info in the southwestern Siberian city of Novosibirsk, according to Ovd-Info, news reports, and Yefremov, who spoke with CPJ via messaging app.

Also on 30 January, police in the southwestern city of Belgorod detained Vladimir Kornev, chief editor of the Telegram channel Belgorod No.1, according to Ovd-Info and news reports; on the same day, the court convicted him of organizing an unsanctioned event and sentenced him to three days of detention. On 31 January, police detained dozens of journalists across the country. The journalists detained in Moscow that day included:

- Anastasiya Demidas, correspondent with the independent news website Vot Tak TV
- Daniil Turovsky, correspondent with the independent YouTube channel vDud
- Georgiy Malets, photographer with the independent broadcaster Belsat TV
- Dmitry Balashov, correspondent with the liberal news website Open Media
- Emil Yunusov and Danil Afonin, correspondents with Sota.Vision
- Mikhail Zelensky, deputy chief editor with the independent news website Kholod
- Oleg Pshenichny, correspondent with The Insider
- Anton Feynberg, correspondent from the business news outlet RBK
- Sergey Parkhomenko, political commentator and host of the liberal radio station Echo Moskvyy
- Svetlana Khrustalyova, correspondent for the independent newspaper Sobesednik
- Ivan Kleymenov, correspondent for the independent news website Meduza

Police interrogated Malets and Balashov as witnesses of the 23 January protests, and released them without charge, according to a Facebook post by Malets and a report by Balashov's employer.

Police also released Yunusova, Afonin, and Feynberg without charge, according to Feynberg and Sota.Vision editor Alexei Obukhov, both of whom spoke with CPJ via messaging app.

Police released Parkhomenko on the same day, after charging him with "participating in an unsanctioned event" and interfering with transportation in the city during the protest; the court hearing on his case was assigned for 26 February.

Police beat Khrustalyova with batons on her arms and body while detaining her, according to her employer and the journalist. She told CPJ that police held her for two hours in a small van with 15 other people, and she had a difficulty breathing. Once at the police station, she was fingerprinted, charged with "participating in an unsanctioned event," and released, she said.

Police detained Turovsky overnight, and on 1 February convicted him of "participating in an unsanctioned event," fined him 20,000 roubles (218 Eur), and released him.

Zelensky was similarly detained overnight; convicted of the same charge, and fined 10,000 roubles (109 Eur).

Demidas was also convicted of "participating in an unsanctioned event" and sentenced to four days of administrative arrest, according to her employer.

Police electrocuted Kleymenov with a Taser on his head, arms, and legs during his detention, which resulted in bruises on his body and required immediate medical treatment, according to news reports, which stated that, after the journalist was treated at a hospital, he was taken back to police detention. On 1 February, he was convicted of "participating in an unsanctioned event and interfering with the movement of transportation," and sentenced to 10 days of arrest.

Police held Pshenichny overnight; a court found him guilty of participating in an unsanctioned event and sentenced him to eight days of detention.

Journalists detained in St. Petersburg on 31 January included:

- Oleg Dilimbetov, correspondent with the business daily newspaper Kommersant
- Serafim Romanov and Denis Korotkov, correspondents with the liberal newspaper Novaya Gazeta
- Timur Hadjibekov, correspondent for the news websites MR7, Znak, and Baza
- Artyom Mazanov, editor at the independent news website TJ

- Anton Oshero, correspondent for the independent outlet Moloko Plus
- Valeriya Savinova, correspondent for the independent news website Severo-Zapad.MBK Media
- Anastasiya Semenovich, correspondent for the newspaper Moskovsky Komsomolets

Police held Dilimbetov, Romanov, Korotkov, Semenovich, Savinova, and Oshero briefly and then released them without charge. Police beat Hadjibekov with batons and electrocuted him with a Taser on his stomach and legs, and choked him with his coat, which resulted in bruising, according to news reports and the journalist, who spoke with CPJ via messaging app. He said police held him briefly and then released him without charge. Police detained Mazanov overnight, and released him yesterday after charging him with "violating the rules of a protest action," according to his employer.

On 31 January police in other cities detained:

- Aleksandra Teplyakova and Daniil Kulikov, correspondents for the independent YouTube news channel RusNews, in the eastern city of Khabarovsk
- Roman Lazukov, correspondent with Novaya Gazeta, in Khabarovsk
- Yekaterina Ishchenko, correspondent for Sota.Vision in the eastern city of Vladivostok
- Svetlana Shishkanova, chief editor of the newspaper Batayskoye Vremya, in the southern city of Rostov-on-Don
- Makar Palamarenko, correspondent for the independent news website Donday in Rostov-on-Don
- Vladislav Petrov, correspondent for Sota.Vision in the northern city of Syktyvkar
- Elena Kostyuchenko, correspondent for Novaya Gazeta, in the southern city of Sochi
- Valeriya Zhitkova, correspondent for the independent news website The Bell, in Sochi
- Denis Adamov, chief editor of the independent news website Yakutia.Info, in the eastern Siberian city of Yakutsk
- Ruslan Rybakov, camera operator for the independent news website Prospekt Mira, in the eastern Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk
- Dmitry Polushin, correspondent with the independent news website KrasNews, in Krasnoyarsk

Those journalists were detained briefly and then released without charge except for Lazukov, Teplyakova, Shishkanova, and Palamarenko. Lazukov was charged with "participating in an unsanctioned event" and then released. Teplyakova remained in detention overnight, and yesterday a court found her guilty of participating in an unsanctioned event and sentenced her to nine days of detention. Shishkanova was convicted on the same charge and sentenced to 10 days of detention, according to news reports. Palamarenko was also convicted of participating in an unsanctioned event, fined 10,000 roubles (109 Eur), and released. Police detained Ishchenko twice, both times while she was conducting a live broadcast from the protest site in Vladivostok, and each time released her without charge; during the second detention, police held her for about seven hours.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

FOLLOW-UPS

- RSF Alert: "Press freedom "massively flouted" during 2nd round of pro-Navalny protests"
- RSF Alert: "More intimidation of journalists ahead of second round of pro-Navalny protests"
- CPJ Alert: "Russian police detain or harass more than 100 journalists amid January 31 pro-Navalny protests"