

Russian Protests June – December 2014



Thousands rally in Moscow against health care cuts

Yahoo News 2 December 2014

At least 5,000 Russians marched through Moscow on Sunday to protest against plans to lay off thousands of doctors and close hospitals in the capital amid a flagging economy.

Doctors, patients and other protesters braved the freezing cold to voice their opposition to an ongoing Moscow health care reform that could remove up to 10,000 doctors from their jobs and close 28 hospital and clinics by early next year. The demonstration followed a previous doctors' rally early this month, which was the first social protest in Russia in a decade. The pressure on the country's budget has intensified as the economy is taking a hit from low oil prices, a drop in the value of the national currency and from Western sanctions over its role in the deadly conflict in eastern Ukraine. Many of the protesters were dressed in white coats over their winter jackets.

Some carried banners with the names of the hospitals that are being closed. "Save money on war, but not on doctors," one banner read. Authorities

defend the reform as a much-needed step to modernize a decrepit Soviet-era health care system and close down hospitals that are deemed inefficient.

They also say it as a step toward implementing President Vladimir Putin's election pledge to increase doctors' salaries to twice that of the average employee by 2018.

Protesters lamented not only the cuts but also the secrecy that has surrounded the reform, the details of which only became public following a leak to the press in October. "We're here to show our solidarity," said Tatyana Korshunova, 69, who works at a research center. "Nobody explained anything to us, there was no discussion (of the reform).

"Moscow psychiatrist Dmitry Albertovich, who would not give his last name for fear of reprisal, said pretty much everyone in the medical community agrees that a reform is needed, "but it's not the issue of what we need the reform for, but it's about how it is being done – this is a disgrace."The 48-year-old's job is safe for now but he says four units in his hospital with dozens of staff have been cut. Moscow authorities said they would offer training programs for those who are being laid off, but doctors have criticized the effort saying it means they are being offered jobs that they are not qualified for. "You cannot turn a surgeon into a psychiatrist just like that," Dmitry Albertovich said. "They will never be good at it.

"The Moscow health department this week held round table discussions with medical professionals, while Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin offered the doctors a one-off severance payment of up to 500,000 rubles (\$10,700) each. The move came just days before the Sunday rally and was considered by some as an attempt to muffle the protest. Valentin Abdulkhayev, a 37-year-old doctor at a tuberculosis clinic, said the offer of the severance pay is "merely about obeying the law. It's what they were supposed to do.

"A petition adopted at the end of Sunday's rally called for the resignation of Mayor Sobyenin and top Moscow health officials.
za.news.yahoo.com

LGBT Activist Compensated After Russian City Bans Gay Pride Parade

| The Moscow Times Dec. 05 2014 11:09

A court in Kostroma has awarded compensation to a prominent gay rights activist after authorities unlawfully banned a gay-pride parade and two LGBT-themed protests from taking place in the city.

In accordance with the ruling passed down Wednesday by a district court, local authorities will have to pay 3,000 rubles (\$55) in moral damages to activist Nikolai Alexeyev, the GayRussia.ru. news site reported.

The decision marks the first time in a decade that Alexeyev, the founder of the Moscow Gay Pride movement, has been compensated for moral damages in regards to his LGBT rights activism in Russia, the report said.

In 2013, the country adopted legislation banning the promotion of nontraditional

sexual relations to minors, though homosexuality itself is not illegal in Russia.

In October, the same court ruled that Kostroma authorities would have to pay Alexeyev more than 8,000 rubles (\$150) for pecuniary damages and legal fees related to its cancellation of the planned events: a gay pride parade and two protests against the so-called "gay propaganda law."

Alexeyev was attacked by unknown assailants in Kostroma after traveling to the city in September to participate in a hearing against the ban on the parade and rallies, GayRussia.ru reported at the time.

Rights activists have criticized the adoption of Russia's anti-gay propaganda law, saying it will lead to a restriction of the rights and freedoms of the country's LGBT community.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/lgbt-activist-compensated-after-russian-city-bans-gay-pride-parade/512610.html>

Russia's Annexation of Crimea Upends Lives of Tatar Minority

10 December 2014

The Associated Press ... criminal. Simmering Rage In October, when Aksyonov met with Dzhemalov in the nearby city of Belogorsk, hundreds of angry Sary-Su residents massed to vent their outrage over the kidnappings and official actions toward the Crimean Tatars. Footage of the protests was captured by ATR, a Tatar television station and other news outlets. "There were snipers on the roofs, the entire city was surrounded by troops," said Dzhemalov, who said he was nervous the enraged crowd might get out of hand. "If...

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/russias-annexation-of-crimea-upends-lives-of-tatar-minority/513093.html>

Russia's Dozhd TV Defies Crackdown by Continuing Broadcasts From Apartment

Anna Dolgov Dec. 09 2014

Russia's Dozhd TV has been forced to leave its Moscow studio.

Russia's main independent television channel, Dozhd, has been forced to leave its Moscow studio for the second time in as many months, but is continuing its broadcasts from an apartment in the capital, news reports said.

The digital channel has been struggling for survival ever since it was dropped by major cable providers in January after publishing a controversial poll about World War II.

Dozhd had been broadcasting from a studio belonging to Snob magazine, owned by

billionaire and 2012 presidential candidate Mikhail Prokhorov, under a leasing agreement that was supposed to last until February.

But the deal was abruptly canceled and the channel was told to leave the premises by Monday, Forbes Russia reported, citing a company source.

The move followed a similar eviction in October, when Dozhd was given notice to leave its studio in a building next to Snob's offices — in what was widely interpreted as a sign of the Kremlin's crackdown on liberal media.

Dozhd resumed its broadcasts this week from an apartment in Moscow.

It has received a number of offers for new rental spaces, including from independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta, Dozhd chief editor Natalya Sindeyeva told Ekho Moskvyy radio this weekend, but it remained uncertain about how permanent those offers were, considering the recent slew of evictions.

"We felt certain that we will last until the end of January at Snob," Sindeyeva told Ekho Moskvyy. "So we relaxed a bit, to be honest."

Using a regular apartment is only a "temporary solution, because it's not a studio but a spot from which a signal can be sent as long as there is an Internet connection," she said.

Ekho Moskvyy host Irina Petrovskaya said the setup was reminiscent of a widespread Soviet-era practice when music groups that faced government retribution for diverging from the regime's ideological stance on art were banned from performing in concert halls and played for their fans in tightly-packed private apartments instead.
<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russias-dozhd-tv-defies-crackdown-by-continuing-broadcasts-from-apartment/513017.html>

Anti-Putin Rally in Moscow Met With Protest and Sympathy

The Moscow Times Dec. 08 2014

Members of the Solidarity democratic opposition movement this weekend gathered in central Moscow.

Opposition activists rallying in Moscow on Saturday drew an onslaught from Kremlin supporters but also, according to protesters, sympathy from passersby in what they say is a sign that public sentiment might be changing in their favor.

Members of the Solidarity democratic opposition movement this weekend gathered in central Moscow holding up signs denouncing Vladimir Putin's policies in Ukraine and supporting the suspects in the so-called Bolotnoye case, according to a video posted on YouTube by opposition news portal Grani.ru.

Nearly 30 of those who attended an anti-Kremlin rally in 2012 — held on the eve of Vladimir Putin's inauguration for a third term as president — were charged with participating in what the authorities have described as "mass riots."

Critics say that the Bolotnoye case formed part of a wider crackdown on Kremlin opponents and that the skirmishes were stoked by police aggression.

Saturday's rally was challenged by about 20 activists from a rival, pro-Kremlin camp who gathered nearby and accosted the protesters, tearing down some of the signs, Grani.ru reported.

But when Kremlin supporters began chanting "Putin" in a show of allegiance, opposition demonstrators responded by completing the slogan with a chant that has been popularized by Ukrainian soccer fans and that adds a crude expletive to the president's name.

The video shows protesters accusing Putin of "having blood on his hands," and being a "war criminal."

One of the signs held by protesters featured a caricature of Putin looking in the mirror at the image of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin.

Another sign referred to the widespread support for the president in opinion polls to say: "80 percent of Russians support Pu[tin]. Why is Russia following the lead of a crazy dork?"

No signs of police interference could be seen in the video, and no arrests of the opposition activists were reported. Instead, police have detained one of the pro-Kremlin activists, identified as member of the National Liberation movement Gosha Tarasevich, for allegedly attacking opposition demonstrators, Grani.ru reported.

Changing Mood

One of the opposition protesters featured in the video said that while the group's regular rallies in the capital used to be met with almost "universal aggression" from passersby, lately the "mood has changed."

"An increasing number of people have been coming up to us, saying they support us," the activist said.

The same video, however, shows not everyone is keen to join in on the anti-Kremlin sentiment, with spectators accusing the protesters of staging "a Muppet show," and being "traitors."

Responding to one woman's "[German Chancellor] Angela Merkel said it's impossible to talk to [Putin]," a bystander cynically responds: "Who is Angela Merkel?! She's no one."

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/anti-putin-rally-in-moscow-met-with-protest-and-sympathy/512712.html>

Vigilantes Vow to Punish Prostitutes in Buryatia for 'Bringing Shame' to Culture

Allison Quinn Dec. 11 2014

A group of vigilantes in Russia's east Siberian republic of Buryatia has launched a campaign to punish prostitutes for "bringing shame to their people," posting a video to YouTube that shows young women suspected of offering sex for money being tormented.

The video, purportedly published by a youth movement that advocates the "development and renewal of Buryat culture," opens with blaring rap music and the declaration: "We, the youth of Buryatia, are outraged over the decline of moral values and total destruction of Buryatia's culture."

"The vastness of the Internet is boiling over with whores from Buryatia. We will visit each one," the narrator of the video says before he is shown picking out an alleged prostitute named Lina in the capital city Ulan-Ude.

The video shows the narrator contact the young woman, inquire about her hourly rate and then set up a meeting. Once at her home, the young woman is shown being shoved to the floor before having a bucket of green paint poured over her head, as the narrator asks: "Aren't you ashamed?"

He then threatens "to make it worse than just paint" if she's caught selling her body again. "For now this is just a warning. Soon we will begin to act," the group says at the end of the video.

Regional online news site Baikal Daily reported on Thursday that the video had been sent to their editors, though it was unclear whether the woman shown being "punished" was really a prostitute.

Another vigilante group, Occupy Pedophilia, had earlier gained notoriety for similar stunts using the same tactics: hunting down alleged pedophiles and homosexuals on social media websites and tricking them into a meeting, where they would then be attacked on camera.

The founder of that group, Maxim Martsinkevich, was convicted in August of inciting hatred and sentenced to five years in prison.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/vigilantes-vow-to-punish-prostitutes-in-buryatia-for-bringing-shame-to-culture/513136.html>

Moscow Police Detain 25 People at Seminar on Maidan-Style Political Protests

Anna Dolgov Dec. 03 2014 14:34

Moscow police have released some of participants detained at a seminar on Ukrainian-style political protests.

Moscow police have released without charge 25 participants detained at a seminar on Ukrainian-style political protests, in a sign that authorities are looking to sniff out early signs of internal dissent in Russia.

The seminar, which took place Tuesday evening south of the capital, was titled "Maidan: Organizing the Space of Freedom" — a nod to the demonstrations on Kiev's Maidan Square that toppled former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in February.

A clip of the seminar, posted online by opposition news site Grani.ru, shows participants engaged in a video call with Ukrainian protesters, before riot police in helmets and bulletproof vests walk into the room, led by a senior officer.

Colonel Viktor Borisenko, a deputy chief of the southern Moscow branch of the Interior Ministry, told those gathered that he was acting on a "report that a crime is being committed here," according to the video shot by Grani.ru, a website that is blocked in Russia.

Borisenko declined to elaborate on his reasons for shutting down the seminar, saying only that participants would have to submit statements and that explanations could be exchanged at a police station.

Police did not use force nor made any attempts to interrupt a video recording of their involvement, but escorted the participants to a police van and drove them to the station, according to the online footage and participants' comments on social networks.

Grani.ru and the OVDInfo.org news site, which reports on police activities, put the number of detainees at 25 people. All were released later in the night, OVDInfo reported early Wednesday.

No charges have been filed, and police have provided no explanation for the detentions, the report said.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/moscow-police-detain-25-people-at-seminar-on-maidan-style-political-protests/512520.html>

Lawyer Attacked After Defending LGBT Activist in St. Petersburg Court

Anna Dolgov Nov. 26 2014

A human rights lawyer who was employed to defend an LGBT activist said he was attacked after leaving a St. Petersburg court, identifying one of the assailants as an Orthodox activist and aide to a local anti-gay lawmaker.

Vitaly Cherkasov, a member of the Agora human rights group, said a group of men accosted him when he came out of the courthouse and splashed him with an unidentified "corrosive, smelly liquid" that got on his hands, neck and clothes, news site Gazeta.ru reported Tuesday.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/lawyer-attacked-after-defending-lgbt-activist-in-st-petersburg-court/511862.html>

Months After Russian Annexation, Crimeans Ask: 'Where Is Our Money?'

20 November 2014

Outside a high-rise building on the outskirts of this disputed region's capital, a steady stream of frustrated residents exited a government office, clutching folders of bank records and shaking their heads in disgust.

"They are not returning the money," complained Margarita Pobudilova, a 77-year-old retired factory worker who for months has been unable to access more than \$3,000 of her life savings.

Ten months after Russia invaded this Black Sea peninsula and seized it from Ukraine, the financial fallout is still being felt. Thousands of ordinary citizens have little or no access to their funds. Losses for Ukrainian banks continue to mount as billions of dollars worth of loans they issued in Crimea go unpaid. Lawyers for the banks are preparing legal actions against Russia, which confiscated many of the banks' buildings, equipment and cash.

Meanwhile, Crimea has been thrust into a kind of technological time warp: Most ATMs no longer accept non-Russian bank cards; foreign credit cards can't be used to buy things. Most non-local mobile phones can't receive a signal. And even if they could, calling other Crimeans is complicated: Most of the peninsula's residents recently had to get new mobile phone numbers because Ukrainian services were cut off.

The banking and phone chaos are another front in the conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

In Crimea, which has been part of Ukraine for 60 years, Russia has basically blown up the existing banking system, forcing Ukrainian banks to close, banning the Ukrainian currency and replacing the region's retail banking network almost overnight. The resulting economic turmoil has shuttered some businesses and complicated life for thousands, forcing people to deal with a Kafkaesque bureaucracy to try to get their money returned.

<http://dailycitytimes.com/?p=13308>

Siberian City Rallies Against Putin's 'Eternal Winter'

Alexey Eremenko Nov. 10 2014

The recent change to permanent winter time has crippled social, economic and cultural life in the Zabaikalsky region.

Locals in the city of Chita in eastern Siberia have staged a rare public protest against the Kremlin-approved decision to introduce "permanent wintertime" in Russia.

After having practiced daylight saving time since 1917, Russia canceled it in 2011, opting to remain in standard time throughout the year. But this October, it reversed the decision, switching permanently to daylight saving time.

The recent change to permanent winter time has crippled social, economic and cultural life in the Zabaikalsky region, protesters in regional capital Chita said, local news website Zabmedia.ru reported.

With nighttime starting at 4 p.m., locals are reluctant to shop after work — hurting business, farmers have to work with flashlights, and children avoid playing outdoors, protesters said.

The only form of entertainment locals have left to enjoy is the "zombie-box," also known as television, angry Chita residents were cited as saying.

The rally reportedly gathered upward of 1,000 people, a rare occasion for protests outside Moscow. Organizers ran out of pens to sign the petition against "permanent wintertime."

The petition is to be forwarded to the federal government and the State Duma, neither of which has so far commented on the protest.

The Zabaikalsky government, in an indirect recognition of the issue, said earlier this month it was drafting a recommendation for regional employers to push the start of the workday to a relatively early 8 a.m. in a bid to let the locals catch a bit of winter sunshine.

The Kremlin never offered a comprehensive explanation for changing the time twice in four years.

Apparently reflecting this, the population remains split on the "permanent wintertime," with 33 percent endorsing the move, 35 percent supporting annual clock adjustment and 19 percent favoring "permanent summertime," the state-run pollster VTsIOM said last month.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/siberian-city-rallies-against-putins-eternal-winter/510901.html>

U.S. Metal Legends Cannibal Corpse Face Lyrics Ban in Bashkortostan

6 November 2014 The Moscow Times ...

capital Ufa. Cannibal Corpse ran afoul of Russia's guardians of public morals earlier this fall, when they were only able to play two of eight scheduled concerts in Russia. Notably, their Ufa show was among those canceled. Christian ultraconservatives protested their shows and authorities canceled the performances, though citing technicalities rather than censorship. This did not convince the band's fans, who clashed with police in St. Petersburg. Several other prominent extreme metal bands, including... <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/us-metal-legends-cannibal-corpse-face-lyrics-ban-in-bashkortostan/510763.html>

Nationalists Granted Permission to March on Unity Day in Moscow

The Moscow Times Oct. 29 2014

The nationalist organization spearheading Moscow's annual "Russian March" on National Unity Day has received the city's blessing to hold the event, Interfax reported Wednesday.

Earlier this month, Dmitry Dyomushkin, leader of a nationalist organization known simply as "Russians," said the organizers of the Nov. 4 event had submitted numerous request to Moscow City Hall, offering up some 10 potential routes for the march. City authorities had declined their requests, citing organizers' inability to choose a single route as the reason behind their refusal.

Although city authorities granted the organization the right to hold the march with a maximum of 10,000 participants, they have forbidden the organizers from staging a concert or protest at the end of the march, as had been the case in last year's iteration, Interfax reported.

The march, traditionally held under slogans such as "Russia for Russians," will be held in the southeastern neighborhood of Lyublino, which is home to a large number of migrant workers from Central Asia.

On Tuesday, the head of Russia's Federation of Migrants warned the country's non-Russians to exercise caution on National Unity Day, given the proliferation of nationalist-themed marches in large cities across the country.

National Unity Day, which has been a public holiday since 2005, commemorates Russia's defeat of Polish invaders in 1612.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/nationalists-granted-permission-to-march-on-unity-day-in-moscow/510294.html>

LGBT demonstrators in St. Petersburg protest against the war in Ukraine.

October 27, 2014

Dozens of nationalists gathered in the southern city of Lipetsk over the weekend to oppose a rally of gay rights activists — all three of its participants, a news report said.

Two young women and a man met Sunday in Lipetsk and walked to the city's central Sobornaya Ploshchad, where their demonstration for LGBT rights had been expected to take place, local news site LRNews reported.

The rally was greeted by about 100 nationalists and conservative activists, as well as police officers deployed to prevent violence, the report said.

One of the rally participants, who gave her name as Reida Linn, said she and her friends wanted to draw public attention to “fighting homophobia, discrimination, violations of the Constitution and of the rights of LGBT people,” according to LRNews.

Local authorities declined to issue authorization for the rally, she was quoted as saying. Participants in unauthorized rallies are subject to prosecution under Russian law.

A middle-aged man threw a green tomato at the demonstrators and shouted: “You have no place on Russian soil,” before he was detained by police, the report said.

As opponents continued their verbal assaults, police detained the demonstrators, placing them in a police van. The Komsomolskaya Pravda daily described police actions as an attempt to protect the protestors.

A group of young men then tried to overturn the vehicle before additional police troops rushed to the scene, dispersing the crowd that surrounded the van and detaining four people, news reports said.

Demonstrations of anti-gay sentiment in Russia have reportedly flared up after the country last year passed a law banning the promotion of gay “propaganda” to minors <http://dailycitytimes.com/?p=12572>

Months After Russian Annexation, Crimeans Ask: 'Where Is Our Money?'

20 November 2014

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Meanwhile, Crimea has been thrust into a kind of technological time warp: Most ATMs no longer accept non-Russian bank cards; foreign credit cards can't be used to buy things. Most non-local mobile phones can't receive a signal. And even if they could, calling other Crimeans is complicated: Most of the peninsula's residents recently had to get new mobile phone numbers because Ukrainian services were cut off.

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<http://dailycitytimes.com/?p=13308>

Entire Staff of Moscow Film Museum Resigns in Protest at New Director 27

October 2014 By Allison Quinn

The Moscow Times ... October, 13 staff members filed a petition demanding Solonitsyna's resignation, in part because of her decision to fire Maxim Pavlov, the museum's longtime deputy director of scientific outreach activities. At that time, several employees resigned in protest of Pavlov's dismissal, though Solonitsyna shrugged off criticism of her leadership, saying the dismissal was in line with optimization measures, news site Lenta.ru reported. The museum, established in 1989, is renowned for its film collection...

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/entire-staff-of-moscow-film-museum-resigns-in-protest-at-new-director/510148.html>

St. Petersburg Police Dismantle Evicted Homeowners' Protest Camp

Anna Dolgov Oct. 21 2014 14:07

Police in St. Petersburg have dismantled a tent camp that demonstrators tried to set up outside the municipal administration in protest against their eviction from city-issued apartments.

The camp was erected by construction workers and their families who were offered housing after moving to St. Petersburg on government contracts decades ago but who now face eviction after their building was bought by a private company.

The protesters on Monday took tents and sleeping bags to St. Petersburg's central Smolny Garden, which flanks the city administration, saying they had no place else to live, the TASS news agency reported.

Police intervened before the protest could take root and escorted three of the demonstrators to a police station, but a spokesperson maintained that "they had not been detained," TASS reported.

The three protesters held at the police station were scheduled to face court on Tuesday on charges of "violating the rules on security and the use of parks," reported Radio Svoboda, RFE/RL's Russian service.

Several other protesters said they would hold their vigil and sleep in the open air after police banned them from putting up tents, the report said. Night temperatures in St. Petersburg now drop below freezing.

The building where the families were earlier housed is located on Ulitsa Ilyushina and was put up in the dying days of the Soviet era to provide homes for construction workers who arrived to build housing in the expanding metropolis, Radio Svoboda reported.

In exchange for a key to a city-owned apartment, the workers had to give up their rooms in St. Petersburg's kommunalki — communal apartments, often located in grand older buildings in the city center — though residents were unable to obtain ownership of their new flats, Radio Svoboda reported.

A private firm bought the building in 1991 and a decade later demanded that residents vacate their homes or pay full market prices for their apartments, the report said. Following years of protests and appeals, some of the residents have received other public housing but others have been refused, Radio Svoboda reported.

At least four families have been evicted, leaving people sleeping in the building's stairwell, and the remaining nine families are awaiting eviction any day, the report added.

"We are besieged from all sides: The owners of the housing are demanding hundreds of thousands of rubles from us for rent, court bailiffs are demanding fines for our refusal to move out voluntarily," one of the protesters, Marina Kozhina, was quoted as saying. "We can't understand the authorities' reasoning."

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/st-petersburg-police-dismantle-evicted-homeowners-protest-camp/509799.html>

British Band Cradle of Filth's Show Canceled in Siberia Amid Protests

Christian radicals in Russia scored a new victory after yet another show by a Western metal band was canceled in Siberia. Christian radicals in Russia scored a new victory after yet another show by a Western metal band was canceled in Siberia. The latest victim were the British black metal legends Cradle of Filth, who were unable to play a show in Novosibirsk on Monday, Interfax said. The original venue was unavailable because of a snap raid by drug police, the report said. Organizers were unable...

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/british-band-cradle-of-filths-show-canceled-in-siberia-amid-protests/509770.html>

Russian Artist Cuts Off Part of Ear in Act of Protest

Reuters Oct. 19 2014



Russian artist Pyotr Pavlensky, known for his shocking protest stunts, cut off part of his earlobe in a protest titled "Segregation" at a Moscow psychiatric institution Sunday.

Pavlensky, who last year made headlines around the world for another protest in which he nailed his scrotum to the cobblestones of Red Square, was this time protesting against the use of forensic psychiatry for politically motivated purposes.

He cut off his earlobe while sitting naked on the wall of the Serbsky State Scientific Center for Social and Forensic Psychiatry, an institution that was infamous in Soviet times for declaring political dissidents mentally unstable. He was taken away by police following the stunt.

Pavlensky said he was demonstrating how authorities could "cut off" an unwanted individual from society by using psychiatric and medical diagnosis to forcefully send a person to a penitentiary hospital.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russian-artist-cuts-off-part-of-ear-in->

Moscow Motor Rally to Protest New Parking Rules Broken Up by Traffic Police

The Moscow Times Oct. 19 2014

A motor rally held by opposition activists in Moscow on Sunday was broken up by police and several people were reportedly detained.

The rally, which began at about 2:30 p.m. on the Garden Ring road, was meant to protest the Moscow government's new policies on parking for city residents, many of whom are now obligated to pay fees.

Maria Gaidar, an activist who ran for the Moscow City Duma elections but was barred from the race on a technicality, had announced the event on her LiveJournal blog on Friday.

Gaidar wrote on her blog that the rally was not a protest against paid parking, but against the way authorities have gone about implementing the new parking rules, without consulting city residents.

"We had about 10 cars [participating]. But we were stopped by traffic police for a check of documents, and they said we were parked in a prohibited area, an area, incidentally, that they themselves led us to by stopping the race there. Now police have taken the documents of all the drivers, they are checking them now, and riot police have arrived," Gaidar was cited as telling radio station Govorit Moskva by Lenta.ru.

The rally was supposed to end with signatures being collected from residents who supported Gaidar's initiative, Lenta.ru reported.

Although traffic police ended the rally prematurely, Gaidar told Govorit Moskva that the group had already managed to collect 2,500 signatures.

"The transportation department, unfortunately, has shown that they are not ready to listen to us and those who have signed [the petition]," Gaidar was cited as saying.

As of Sunday evening, the activists were still at a police station having their documents checked. It was unclear what charges, if any, the activists faced.
<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/moscow-motor-rally-to-protest-new-parking-rules-broken-up-by-traffic-police/509703.html>

Communist Deputy Names and Shames Colleagues He Says Have Illicit Overseas Assets

The Moscow Times Oct. 16 2014

Last edited 19:44 State Duma deputy Valery Rashkin has presented the Duma's ethics committee with a list of nearly 100 fellow lawmakers who he says have failed to disclose ownership of foreign assets in violation of a recently passed law, Russian media reported Thursday.

Rashkin, a deputy for the Communist Party, made waves late last month when he claimed that dozens of lawmakers were concealing overseas assets, prompting State Duma speaker Sergei Naryshkin to demand a full list of the deputies in question.

The list was reported Thursday to include regional lawmakers, State Duma deputies and members of the Federation Council, the upper house of the Russian parliament. Rashkin said he had used publicly available information to compile the list, including media reports and income declarations.

Noting that Russian law prohibits State Duma deputies from keeping money in overseas bank accounts or other financial instruments, Rashkin asked how the deputies on his list had managed to "worm out" of being held liable.

"Either they are opening offshore accounts or they have some sort of corporate accounts, I don't know. But there are apparently some mechanisms that are allowing them to skate around our laws while conforming to foreign ones," Rashkin was cited as saying by news website Noviy Izvestia.

The law, which was signed by President Vladimir Putin last May, also obliges legislators to declare any foreign real estate they own. The move was meant to enhance national security, counter corruption and return money to the Russian budget.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/communist-deputy-names-and-shames-colleagues-he-says-have-illicit-overseas-assets/509567.html>

'Federalization' Activist Says Seeks Asylum in Ukraine After Russia Declares Him Terrorist

The Moscow Times Oct. 10 2014

A 21-year-old activist who took part in a summer rally in support of federalizing one of Russia's southern regions has reportedly fled to Ukraine and requested asylum there after being deemed a terrorist at home.

The activist, Vyacheslav Martynov, said in comments carried by Ukrainian online news site Segodnya.ua that he had been placed on a terrorist watch list and accused of making public appeals for extremist activities and separatism.

Two other activists were also added to the government's terrorist watch list, according to Lenta.ru: Darya Polyudova and Pyotr Lyubchenkov.

Both were involved in the mid-August protest rally in Krasnodar calling for broader autonomy in the region; Polyudova has been in detention since late August.

The rally for the "federalization for Kuban" — a part of southern Russian that comprises most of the Krasnodar region — called for broader economic autonomy and self-governance rights for the region but made no demands for succession.

The demonstration proved to be highly controversial, and opposition-minded publication Novaya Gazeta reported at the time that several pro-Kremlin activists had attended the event with the sole purpose of provoking "federalization" supporters to incite violence.

"We responded to the Russian state using its own weapon — we organized a rally for the federalization of Kuban. After clashes with some pro-Russian demonstrators, police detained us but let the provocateurs go, and I was arrested for 15 days," Martynov was cited as saying by Lenta.ru.

After being placed on the government's terrorist watch list, Martynov said, his bank accounts were frozen, as were those belonging to Lyubchenkov.

Currently, Martynov is in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, where he recently staged a picket wearing a sign that read: "Emigrant from Russia to Ukraine, ask me whatever you want," Segodnya.ua reported.

The criminal case against the three federalization activists was launched on Sept. 10. The charges carry a combined maximum punishment of 10 years in prison.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/federalization-activist-says-seeks-asylum-in-ukraine-after-russia-declares-him-terrorist/509250.html>

Russians hand in Western T-shirts in patriotic fashion drive

October 9, 2014

Looking to put a patriotic spin on international sanctions over Ukraine, a local group is touring Moscow, urging passers-by to swap their Western-branded T-shirts for homegrown tops sporting pro-Russian slogans.

"Sanctions? Don't make my Iskanders laugh," reads one T-shirt, referring to a Russian missile system. "The Topol is not afraid of sanctions," says another, vaunting the power of a Russian intercontinental ballistic missile.

A bus, decorated with the blue, white and red of the Russian flag, has already exchanged 10,000 tops this week and is due to keep on touring the capital until Oct.

6.

“Everyone’s been responding well, even foreigners. People are giving up their shirts with pleasure,” said Anastasia Zadorina, the campaign’s designer, wearing one of her own creations — “We have our own cool things without Coca-Cola.”

Western nations have imposed an array of sanctions on Russia in response to its involvement in the conflict in Ukraine, including its annexation of Crimea earlier this year.

The punitive measures have limited Russia’s access to foreign money, sent the rouble to historic lows and slowed economic growth to a crawl. Russia has responded by banning many Western food products and appealing to patriot fervor.

“We can live without oysters and Parmesan and without Western fashion,” Zadorina said. “We don’t want to offend anyone, we just love our homeland.”

Some of the T-shirts on offer were printed with pictures of military hardware, while others are decorated with an image of the knotted red necktie, synonymous with the Communist Pioneer movement of the former Soviet Union.

The self-styled “ideologist” behind the campaign, Ksenia Melnikova, said the project was not funded by the Kremlin. The group’s website lists Moscow’s Vnukovo airport and two other Russian firms as corporate partners.

“We’re going to Crimea 100 percent. Other regions are inviting us also,” said Melnikova. The Western shirts will be recycled or used to make a political artwork, she added.

Oksana, a 25-year-old student, said she was happy “to support this patriotic campaign” and swap in her Western top for a new Russian design.

“It will all be okay in the end though, we’ll be friends again with the West before long,” she said.

<http://dailycitytimes.com/?p=11845>

Man Detained for Pepper Spray Attack on Pro-Ukraine Rocker's Gig

3 October 2014 The Moscow Times

Police said Friday they had detained a man suspected of releasing pepper spray at a concert by Russian rocker Andrei Makarevich in protest at the musician's stance on Moscow's actions in Ukraine. Police said Friday they had detained a man suspected of releasing pepper spray at a concert by Russian rocker Andrei Makarevich in protest at the musician's stance on Moscow's actions...

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/man-detained-for-pepper-spray-attack->

Russian Nationalists Hijack Gig by 'Pro-Ukrainian' Rock Star in Moscow

27 September 2014

Notorious nationalist group The Other Russia boasted Friday of having disrupted a show by a Russian rock legend, unleashing pepper spray among the audience.

The attack was a response to musician Andrei Makarevich's alleged support of official Kiev in its standoff with pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine, the group said on its website.

Makarevich's Yiddish Jazz show in Moscow on Thursday was disrupted for two hours, but eventually resumed at the audience's request, Interfax reported.

Police have opened a case on hooliganism charges, punishable by up to five years in prison, but reported no detentions as of Friday.

Makarevich, the frontman of Soviet-era underground rock icons Mashina Vremeni (Time Machine) and an affiliate of President Vladimir Putin, is one of few public figures in Russia to have taken an anti-war stance over Ukraine, performing a concert for Ukrainian children in a former war zone in August.

That show made Makarevich, 60, the target of a vicious smear campaign in state media.

The Other Russia, an unregistered party led by flamboyant writer-turned-politician Eduard Limonov, was vehemently anti-Kremlin in the 2000s, but has recently performed an ideological U-turn, siding with Putin over his alleged — but never confirmed — backing of Ukrainian insurgents.

<http://dailycitytimes.com/?p=11783>

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<http://dailycitytimes.com/?p=11783>

Crimea Tatars Say Assembly Raided by Masked Men and Russian FSB

September 17 2014

Armed and masked men cordoned off the the Crimean Tatars' main assembly in the region as security officials searched it, said a member of the ethnic minority, which widely opposed Russia's annexation.

Russia wrested Crimea away from Ukraine and annexed it in March in spite of opposition from the Tatar community, who make up 300,000 of the Black Sea peninsula's 2 million people and are under pressure to align themselves with the new authorities.

"I came to work shortly after 9.30 a.m. but the building was blocked by armed people in balaclavas and uniforms," Dilyaver Akiyev, head of the secretariat of the assembly, or Mejlis, said Tuesday by phone.

"They are not letting anyone in or out, they are assisted by regular police and the FSB [Federal Security Service] is carrying out searches inside," he said from Crimea's provincial capital Simferopol.

Footage from the site showed several armed men masked by black balaclavas guarding the site.

The FSB declined to comment.

Crimean Tatars are deeply distrustful of Moscow after mass deportation of their kin to Central Asia in 1944 under Soviet leader Josef Stalin.

The community leadership ordered a boycott of a popular vote in Crimea that showed a majority of residents supported joining Russia. Tatars called for autonomy and shunned regional elections after the annexation.

At least two of the Crimean Tatars' senior leaders are now living outside the region and accuse Russia of not allowing them back in.

"The policy of mounting pressure on us, on the Mejlis and the community, continues and is growing in force," Akiyev said. "That is to force us to conform with the new authorities, especially now after the elections.

"But we are not breaking any laws, there are no grounds for any searches," he added.

The Council of Europe's human rights commissioner, Nils Muiznieks, says pressure has increased on Tatars since the annexation, including raids on their businesses and schools.

Russian President Vladimir Putin in April signed a treaty rehabilitating them along with other ethnic minorities who suffered under Stalin.

The mix of pressure and promises to respect their rights has left Crimean Tatars split over whether to resist or deal with Russia.

Kiev and the West introduced sanctions against Russia over Crimea and then expanded them as the pro-Russian separatist unrest spread to eastern Ukraine.

Unlike in Crimea, which was seized by Russian troops largely without bloodshed, the conflict in eastern Ukraine has killed more than 3,000 people, according to the United Nations.

<http://dailycitytimes.com/?p=10998>

Police Ignores Men Armed With 'Kalashnikovs' at Moscow Train Station

HeadLine - Russian News 9 September 2014

A screenshot from a video showing men armed with 'Kalashnikovs' marching through Moscow's central Paveletskaya train station. Ordinary Russians do not enjoy the right to bear arms, but Moscow police appears to be dismissive of ...

<http://dailycitytimes.com/?p=10244>

Angry Russian Smashes iPhone, iPad With Hammer to Protest U.S. Sanctions (Video) August 7, 2014

An angry Russian man who yells, "Barack Obama, we're so fed up with your sanctions," offers some "personal sanctions" by smashing his iPhone and iPad with a hammer on his kitchen table.

He also pours out a bottle of Coca-Cola.

He says the video, which has been watched more than 200,000 times since being

uploaded to YouTube last Thursday, is a direct address to the U.S. president.

He adds that he will “categorically refuse” to go to America or even “take one step” inside an American store as long as the U.S. imposes sanctions on Russia.

“I will not spend a single kopek on your crap!”

“McDonald’s?! I will walk around it on the other side of the street!”

*Warning: The video contains some Russian curse words

<http://dailycitytimes.com/?p=7758>

New 'Anti-Maidan Law' Lets Russian Authorities Come Down Harder on Protesters

July 23, 2014

Following mass protests that rocked Moscow and other Russian cities in 2011 to 2012, the federal government has taken various measures to toughen the rules regulating public rallies.

Amid of flurry of new laws announced Tuesday, President Vladimir Putin signed legislation bolstering punishments for unruly protesters.

Repeat violations of the law governing public rallies can now warrant fines ranging between 600,000 and 1 million rubles (\$30,000), or up to five years in prison.

The new fines impact recidivists, defined under the amended legislation as those who are caught violating the law’s terms more than once within a 180-day period.

The law also increases the amount of time detained protesters can spend in police custody to 30 days, double the former limit of 15 days.

Speaking at a Security Council meeting on Tuesday, President Vladimir Putin said that while Russia will fight radicalism in the country, it will not do so by “tightening the screws.”

“We will mostly rely on civil society,” Putin said. “It is important that all Russians, irrespective of where they live, have equal rights and opportunities. This is the basis of democracy. The principles of the Constitution must be strictly adhered to,” he said.

At the time of the bill’s submission to the State Duma, its author — United Russia Deputy Alexander Sidyakin — dubbed it the “anti-Maidan law,” referring to the upheaval that ousted former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, whose reign ended amid large-scale protests centered in Kiev’s Maidan, or Independence Square.

Following mass protests that rocked Moscow and other Russian cities in 2011 to 2012, the federal government has taken various measures to toughen the rules regulating public rallies.

A series of measures was introduced in June 2012, when the maximum fine for violating public order during protests was increased to 300,000 rubles (\$8,500), while many aspects of the organization and conduct of the rallies were strictly regulated.

Regional legislatures then adopted their own iterations of the law.

Putin also signed a law on Tuesday introducing tougher sentencing options for calls to violate Russia's territorial integrity. Violators will now face up to four years in prison, whereas the maximum punishment previously stood at three years.

<http://dailycitytimes.com/?p=7146>

Russian Believers Appeal to Moscow Mayor to Ban 'Blasphemous' Marilyn Manson Concert

June 21, 2014

Marilyn Manson has also been declared persona non grata in other Russian cities.

Russian Orthodox activists have implored Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin to cancel the upcoming concert of controversial musician Marilyn Manson, saying the singer violates Russia's anti-blasphemy law.

Dmitry Tsorionov, the head of "God's Will," a Russian Orthodox social movement, said believers condemned the "blasphemy and profanity of his [Manson's] song lyrics but mostly by his behavior during performances," RIA Novosti reported Thursday.

"The burning and destruction of the Bible is an integral part of his show," Tsorionov told RIA Novosti on Friday. "For example, the culmination of his concert in St. Petersburg was the destruction of a Bible in front of an enthusiastic crowd that he had brought to an absolutely inadequate state."

The organization also said Manson's performances were "full of elements insulting to the feelings of believers" and promoted "religious hatred, cruelty, murder, suicide, sexual perversion and Satanism among young people, including minors."

In July 2013, Russia passed a new anti-blasphemy law introducing fines and possible prison sentences for offending the "feelings of religious believers."

Manson, who is scheduled to perform in Moscow on June 27, has also been declared persona non grata in other Russian cities.

Local authorities in Novosibirsk announced on Wednesday that Manson's concert set

to take place on June 29 was being canceled for “fear of the safety” of its residents, RIA Novosti reported.

On June 11, 400 residents of Novosibirsk demonstrated against Manson’s planned visit to the city. The participants in the protest handed out St. George ribbons, held icons and carried posters with the inscription “Say no to Uncle Manson,” Lenta.ru reported.

<http://dailycitytimes.com/?p=5966>

Moscow Grants Rare Approval to Freedom-of-Assembly Protest

May 22, 2014

The Other Russia leader Eduard Limonov at a rally in Moscow in 2011.

In an unexpected move, Moscow authorities have reportedly approved a request by controversial political party The Other Russia to hold a freedom-of-assembly rally in the city center this month.

Party member Alexander Averin announced via his LiveJournal page on Wednesday that city officials had sanctioned a “Strategy 31” event that the party applied to orchestrate. Strategy 31 is an ongoing series of rallies held at the end of each 31-day month. The date was chosen in honor of Article 31 of the Russian Constitution, which guarantees the right to hold peaceful public gatherings.

While Strategy 31 events have been sanctioned in the past, this marks the first occasion when The Other Russia was granted permission to organize the event.

The Other Russia has frequently been denied registration as an official political party. In the past, the Justice Ministry has attributed its refusal to the failure of the party’s charter to comply with federal law. The Justice Ministry issued its most recent refusal in January without specifying a reason.

Another party established by The Other Russia leader Eduard Limonov was labeled as extremist and accordingly banned in 2007.

Limonov has organized and carried out Strategy 31 events in the past, albeit without permission, resulting in the arrests of numerous organizers and participants. Limonov himself was detained at the most recent iteration of the event in March.

<http://dailycitytimes.com/?p=5199>

Meeting for Tatar Victims of Stalinist Deportations Could Be Canceled

May 18, 2014

Crimean authorities have drawn up an order prohibiting any large scale public meetings on the peninsula until June 6, a move that could result in the cancellation of a planned Crimean Tatar event remembering Stalin’s deportation of the ethnic group.

The order, carrying the name of Crimea's acting head Sergei Aksyonov and published Friday on Facebook, says that the decision was connected to violence in south-eastern Ukraine and aimed at eliminating possible extremist provocations.

A meeting had been planned for May 18, Crimean Tatars' traditional day of remembrance for those deported by Soviet leader Josef Stalin for their alleged collaboration with Germany in World War II. Many of the 200,000 deportees died on their way to into exile in Central Asia.

The Muslim minority group was eventually allowed to return to the peninsula in the 1980s.

The relationship between the Crimean Tatars and the current authorities in Simferopol is a troubled one, with many having boycotted the March referendum on joining Russia.

Furthermore, thousands took to the streets earlier this month after their spiritual leader Mustafa Dzhemilev — who was a former leader of the Mejlis, the ethnic group's representative body — was banned from entering Crimea.

Crimean prosecutor Natalya Poklonskaya said she has asked for criminal cases to be opened against those who protest publicly against Dzhemilev's ban and threatened to "liquidate" the Mejlis.

Crimean Tatars' interactions with Russian authorities have not been entirely negative, however.

Last month President Vladimir Putin signed a decree officially rehabilitating the Crimean Tatars, while some small Crimean Tatar groups have said that Kiev had done little to help them since their return and that they are happy to be part of Russia.

Meeting with Crimean Tatar representatives on Friday, Putin said "We cannot allow the Crimean Tatar people to become a bargaining chip in any disputes, including and above all intergovernmental disputes."

<http://dailycitytimes.com/?p=4777>

Moscow sees thousands march for peace in eastern Ukraine

September 21, 2014



Participants in the March for Peace staged by the opposition in Moscow (RIA Novosti

Anissa Naouai, Politics, Protest, Russia, Ukraine Huge crowds of protesters took to the streets of the Russian capital to demand peace in Ukraine, in the biggest opposition rally in half a year.

The opposition organizers failed to attract the promised 50,000 for the event, but “there was a very high turnout,” RT’s Anissa Naouai reported from the center of Moscow.

City authorities estimated the turnout at 5,000, but the number voiced by independent monitors – 26,000 – seems more believable, according to Naouai.

<http://rt.com/news/189472-moscow-opposition-march-ukraine/>

Non-parliamentary opposition is losing ground

15.09.2014

Opposition parties are not actively engaged in the campaign for elections to the Moscow city Duma and made the wrong accents in its campaigning, the well-known Russian political analysts believe.

"The opposition simply has ceased to conduct the campaign. They put up candidates and have decided that will not actually fight, did so "for show". The opposition did not show at least some result. They have hands down initially, "says Professor at the higher school of Economics, the political scientist Oleg Matvejčev.

<http://mospravda.ru/home->

lenta/article/neparlamentskaya_oppoziciya_teryet_svoi_pozicii/?sphrase_id=77275

Anti-Maidan activists blast Yabloko party over US-funded protests

September 9, 2014



Election, Opposition, Politics, Protest, Russia Representatives of the recently-founded anti-Maidan council claim that the veteran liberal party has received millions from the US and plans to overthrow the Russian government with the help of Ukrainian and Georgian spin doctors.

The head of the Anti-Fascist anti-Maidan council, Evgeny Shabayev has told the popular mass circulation daily Izvestia that his group possessed information about Ukrainian and Georgian citizens who played major roles in preparations to the violent events leading to displacement of governments and dissolution of parliaments in these countries – the so-called ‘color revolutions’. Now these people arrive in Russia and start talks with representatives of the opposition party Yabloko and other opposition groups in order to prepare and launch a similar regime change in Russia, the activist claimed.

According to Shabayev, at present stage Yabloko together with members of the Solidarity group are holding a string of single-person protests. Over 1,000 people have been hired to participate in them and each signed a contract to picket for 15 days for a \$2,500 fee. The total budget of the event amounts to over 90 million rubles (about \$2.4 million) and it will end with a massive rally on September 21.

The activist noted that the timing of protests is tied with the approaching national voting day, which falls on September 14. He said that the most intense and numerous protests will take place in major cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg (Moscow is holding elections to the city legislature and St. Petersburg is holding its mayoral poll).

Shabayev also said that it was obvious for him that the whole scenario is backed by the US Department of State as the United States is interested in changing the political system in Russia, as already happened in Georgia, Ukraine, Libya and other countries where the ‘color revolutions’ had succeeded.

Boris Nemtsov of the opposition party Parnas (People's Freedom Party) has confirmed that a major rally called the March of Peace was scheduled for September 21 and that it was organized together with Yabloko.

The Yabloko party has strongly denied receiving funds from any foreign state as well as organizing any protests. However, a source in the Moscow City Hall has told Izvestia that the pickets in the city center had been organized by Yabloko and the participants were protesting for fees.

The Anti-Maidan Council was formed in August this year by veterans of the Russian military and special forces together with rights activists and representatives of Orthodox Christian community. The main goal of the group was announced as thwarting attempts to forcefully change the political system in Russia by informing citizens of the methods of Western propaganda. The council also plans to organize own rallies and events in order to promote the interests of the Russian state and prevent ethnic tensions in the nation's regions.

The Yabloko party was founded in 1993 and is one of the oldest in Russia. The party promotes the ideas of democracy and social liberalism and it was fairly popular in mid-1990s, winning about 10 percent of seats in the lower house in 1995. However, since then the public support for Yabloko has dwindled and the party got no seats in the State Duma in 2007 and 2011.

<http://rt.com/politics/186252-russian-maidan-yabloko-dollars/>

Russian citizens lose taste for public protest – poll

September 08, 2014 10:32

Election, Opposition, Politics, Protest, Russia Readiness to take part in protest actions has plunged to all-time low in Russia. Those who see themselves at street rallies say they would do so for an improvement of living standards rather than to change the political reality.

According to research conducted by established independent pollster Levada-Center in late August, only 12 percent of Russians consider mass political protests possible and the share of those who are ready to personally take part in them is even lower, at 7 percent. Levada specialists say this is the lowest result in their company's history, which dates back to 2003. Similar research conducted by the same agency in February this year gave the results of 23 and 10 percent respectively.

The share of Russians who allow the possibility of protests over the economic and social situation in the country was slightly higher at 17 percent, but only 8 percent of citizens claimed they could personally take part in such rallies. In February this year, the number of those who expected economic protests was at 28 percent, while 10 percent said they could take part in them.

The most recent surge in street rallies and pickets took place before and after the

presidential and parliamentary elections of 2011 and 2012. Before it about 35 percent of Russians said they expected political and economic protests and 15 percent said they could participate in them.

Researchers noted that the results are especially interesting given that the record of political passiveness is registered as the country readies to the national elections day scheduled for September 14. On this day a third of Russian regions will hold gubernatorial polls and even more, including the country's capital will have elections and by-elections for their regional legislatures. The center's experts have suggested that the passiveness could be caused by the people's disappointment in politics and lack of believe in changes.

Levada-Center's General Director Lev Gudkov said in an interview with the Novaya Gazeta newspaper that the results could be explained by the Ukrainian crisis, which had completely occupied the mass media and distracted the Russian public from domestic problems. Other possible reasons nominated by Gudkov were the weakness of opposition parties and the fact that the protests in 2011 and 2012 allegedly failed to bring any tangible results.

However, the leading pollster noted that the situation might change in the nearest future.

"Economic expectations started to fall in August. After President Putin has introduced reciprocal sanctions, the internal inflation went up and people started to feel it. The peak of discontent with the economic situation can fall in November. Most likely it will not be connected with the reciprocal sanctions, but would reflect the general irritation of the public," Gudkov told the newspaper.

It should be noted that along with the drop in protest moods sociologists register a sharp surge in support of Vladimir Putin and his allies. Levada's research conducted in mid-August showed that 52 percent of citizens were ready to vote for Putin at a presidential election, compared to just 29 percent in January this year. Another influential sociological think tank, the Public Opinion Foundation, conducted similar research a week earlier and found that 68 percent of all potential voters were ready to support Putin at presidential elections, compared to 58 percent in March and 46 percent in January.

<http://rt.com/politics/185892-russia-protests-apathy-poll/>

Communists say Russia should throw off 'strangling noose' of WTO

August 25, 2014



CPRF activists protest against Russia's joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) on Revolution Square in Moscow. (RIA Novosti / Kirill Kallinikov)

Politics, Protest, Russia, Sanctions, WTO Communist Party MPs have prepared a bill detailing Russia's exit from the World Trade Organization, claiming membership leads only to problems and promotes attempts at the 'external management' of the national economy.

The bill on the ending of Russia's WTO membership has been prepared by lawmakers Valery Rashkin and Sergey Obukhov.

"Russia must quit the WTO agreement to protect its agriculture, manufacturing, and other branches of economy. Russia's membership in the WTO in times when a great number of foreign countries are introducing stricter sanctions against our country is against common sense," reads the explanatory note attached to the bill.

"In reality it is a strangling noose on our country's neck, and an attempt to introduce external management of Russia as a nation," the head of the Communist Party's legal department Vadim Solovyov was quoted as saying by the ITAR-TASS news agency.

The move was timed to coincide with the two-year anniversary of Russia's entry into the World Trade Organization, and MP Rashkin called it a "sad date."

"Those who had actively lobbied the entry promised that it would open new markets and give access to the latest technologies, the much needed modernization, but instead we got a sharp fall in GDP growth in just two years – from an acceptable 3.4 percent to a puny 0.2 percent. Capital outflow has intensified as well as the inflow of imports that destroy domestic production. The investment activity has plunged and even the most powerful enterprises and industries are suffering from gigantic losses," the lawmaker said in an interview with the Interfax news agency.

The sponsors of the bill emphasize that the fall in GDP growth had been seen before foreign countries introduced sanctions against Russian companies and officials. With

sanctions, the situation is becoming even more serious, they add.

“Currently Russia’s foreign “partners” are violating the WTO’s foundation ideals and general guidelines as they introduce economic sanctions that limit free trade. In view of this we see no possibilities, neither for modernization through importing technology, or for opening new markets for Russian producers,” the authors of the bill wrote in a parliamentary letter.

The Communist MPs also complained that Russia’s position in the WTO not only prevents it from vetoing some especially unfavorable decisions but does not allow even basic influence on the organization’s rules and directives.

The Communist Party has protested against Russia’s WTO membership when it was in preparatory stage and the protests became more vocal after it became a reality. In September last year the party claimed it had gathered 2 million signatures to hold a vote of no confidence in government, naming the unfavorable results of joining in 2012 as one of the main reasons.

<http://rt.com/politics/182560-russia-communists-wto-quit/>

Spetsnaz veterans to launch ‘anti-Maidan council’ in Russia

August 04, 2014

Veterans of the Russian military and special forces, together with rights activists and representatives of Orthodox Christian community, are to jointly launch a group to try and thwart any attempts to forcefully change the political system in the country.

Immediately after the founding convention, scheduled for late August, The ‘Anti-Fascist Anti-Maidan Council’ will concentrate on informing Russian citizens on the methods of Western propaganda that seeks to disrupt the constitutional order in the country and forcefully overthrow the lawfully elected authorities, the activists told the mass circulation daily Izvestia.

The council’s founders claim they possess information that after the nearest all-Russian election day on September 14, anti-government activists will launch their own committees and headquarters for organizing street protest and other actions aimed at sowing discord in the Russian community.

<http://rt.com/politics/177752-russian-spetsnaz-maidan-council/>

Leftist activists convicted of masterminding anti-government riots

July 24, 2014

Clashes, Crime, Opposition, Politics, Russia The Moscow City Court has convicted two key figures from the fringe leftist opposition of organizing mass unrest at the 2012 state-sanctioned rally against alleged violations at parliamentary polls.

The head of the unregistered political movement Leftist Front, Sergey Udaltsov, and

his closest aide, Leonid Razvozhayev, have been sentenced to 4.5 years behind bars.

Previously, prosecutors demanded that the duo be sentenced to eight years in prison. The maximum punishment for organizing mass unrest which results in violence or destruction of property is 10 years behind bars.

The ruling is the culmination of the resonant Bolotnaya Square case that has already resulted in several convictions and sentences, as well as one court order of compulsory psychiatric treatment. Also, several people convicted in this case have already been released under a recent amnesty.

The unlawful actions took place at Bolotnaya Square in Moscow on May 6, 2012, shortly before Vladimir Putin's presidential inauguration. On that day several Russian opposition parties held a sanctioned rally against alleged violations during the 2011 parliamentary polls.

At first the march went peacefully, but then some of the protesters started to violate the conditions of the event and clash with policemen who wanted to restore order. As a result the rally was dispersed and many people were detained. Police established the identities of most active rioters, found and charged them.

Investigators have established that the situation was prepared and provoked by several leftist activists, headed by Udaltsov, and Razvozhayev who also planned to repeat the riots in other parts of the Russian Federation. Law enforcers also claimed that the operation was ordered and financed by Georgian politician Givi Targamadze, described by the mass media as a leading expert in the so-called 'color revolutions' – street protests against allegedly undemocratic steps of the authorities that lead to quick change of the political regime.

<http://rt.com/politics/175224-udaltsov-jail-sentence-moscow/>

Rosavtodor wants to create on the highways toll lanes

17.07.2014

... We need more bands that are from drivers to pump money? I think it will lead to widespread avtohuliganstvu, because all drivers will be smeared with rooms and they also will travel to denials, sidewalks and so on, or to mass protest actions, because car owners' patience already is full to the brim. Many readers who call us the "book of complaints", remembered about Rosavtodoru (or rather, all the same, his "little son" Avtodoru) paid double Kashirskoye Highway: people regularly ...

http://mospravda.ru/home/article/rosavtodor_hochet_sozdat_na_magistralyah_platnie_polosi/?sphrase_id=77275

Russian prosecutor seeks eight-year jail terms for two protest leaders

Yahoo News 7 July 2014

A Russian state prosecutor demanded eight-year prison sentences on Monday opposition leaders accused of organising mass riots against Vladimir Putin on his inauguration for a third term as president.

Sergei Udaltsov, who has been under house arrest since February 2013, and L

Razvozhayev are accused of coordinating the protests which turned violent on May 6, 2012. They deny organising mass riots or plotting wider unrest.

Police detained more than 400 people and several officers were hurt in clashes after the police restricted the 2012 rally to Bolotnaya Square, across the river from the Kremlin. Seven people were jailed in February over the protests

Kremlin critics accuse police of starting the violence to discredit the opposition after a wave of protests before Putin's return to the Kremlin after four years as prime minister.

Putin also faces accusations of using a pliant judiciary to clamp down on his opponents. He denies interfering in court cases but says anyone who attacks police should be punished.

In his third spell as president, following two successive terms from 2000 until 2008, Putin has adopted an increasingly conservative stance to consolidate his public support.

His popularity ratings have risen to a high of 86 percent, according to the independent polling agency Levada, since the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.

(Reporting by Alexei Anishchuk, Editing by Timothy Heritage)

<http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/default.asp?2,27,3,3247>

Orthodox activists 'confront' Marilyn Manson band with eggs, holy water in Moscow

27.06.2014

... stage at the All-Russia Exhibition Center. But the ... the aftermath of protests against his stage acts – and neither was ...

<http://rt.com/news/169004-manson-orthodox-moscow-concert/>

Christian activists gather enough support to launch bill banning abortion

May 29, 2014

Health, Human rights, Politics, Religion, Russia A group of Orthodox Christian activists claim that they have gathered 100,000 signatures under a petition seeking to completely ban abortions in Russia – a number enough to make it a valid legislative initiative.

In the near future all the documents will be submitted to the authorities and the activists will be waiting for an official reaction to their demands, a member of the Public Chamber, priest Aleksander Pelin was quoted as saying by the ITAR-TASS news agency.

The leader of the activists, Dmitriy Tsorionov elaborated on the initiative, and said that it seeks a complete legislative ban on all abortions, including those made on medical advice and on all abortive means of contraception, such as intrauterine devices and hormonal pills. Tsorionov said his group was not protesting against barrier contraceptives, such as condoms.

According to Russian Law any petition that gathers at least 100,000 signatures of support becomes a draft law and must be considered by parliament. The signatures must be gathered on the special government portal and come from registered Russian citizens. People can also vote against the initiatives on the same portal, but the votes against do not influence the documents' movement, at least technically.

Since the scheme was introduced in March last year only three initiatives have reached the 100,000 signature threshold. The first suggested a price limit for cars purchased by state agencies, and the second called to abolish a new law targeting internet piracy. They were rejected at the first stage. The third sought changes in the rules of self defense favoring the gun lobby, and it is still being considered by an expert group.

Abortions are legal in Russia and have been since Soviet times, but currently centrist-conservative lawmakers want to limit or completely ban them, saying it is partly responsible for the country's dwindling population.

<http://rt.com/politics/162196-russian-orthodox-christian-abortion-ban/>

