

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

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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.

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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.

See also:

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