

# Belarus Detains Ukrainian Football Fans for Anti-Putin Chants at Euro 2016 Qualifier

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Ukraine's Yevhen Konoplyanka (R) is tackled by Belarus' Denis Polyakov during their Euro 2016 qualifying football match in Borisov, October 9, 2014.

MINSK — Belarus police detained scores of Ukrainian and Belarussian football fans who shouted patriotic Ukrainian slogans and chanted abuse against Russian President Vladimir Putin at a match, a rights organization and local media said Friday.

Fans could be heard chanting an abusive anti-Putin refrain on a video clip before the Euro 2016 qualifier started, while witnesses said there were calls during the match of "Glory to the Heroes!" and "Glory to Ukraine!" — stock Ukrainian rallying cries in Kiev's conflict against Russian-backed separatists.

Putin, who was in Minsk on Friday for a summit of leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States, is a reviled figure in Kiev since Russia annexed Crimea in March and threw its support behind separatists fighting government forces in eastern Ukraine.

The Minsk-based human rights group Vesna-96 said about 40 people had been held. A Belarussian police spokesman, Konstantin Shalkevich, confirmed some supporters had been detained, but he would not say how many.

In Kiev, a Foreign Ministry spokesman, Evhen Perebiynis, said: "At the present time, we know that there were 15 Ukrainian citizens detained after the match. Three have been released, 12 are appearing in court. They are accused of sticking up posters."

Earlier this year, Belarus, a Moscow ally but with a solid relationship with Ukraine, hosted talks on the Ukraine crisis between Putin and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko.

Ukraine beat neighboring Belarus 2-0 in the European qualifier which was played in the Belarussian town of Borisov.

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