The Moscow Times
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Thousands of Russians Evacuated From Turkey

By The Moscow Times

July 18, 2016



Over 450,000 Russians were evacuated from Turkey on Sunday following a failed military coup that resulted in at least 290 deaths, mass street rallies and up to 6,000 arrests.

What Happened

Turkey has been through a dramatic weekend. On Friday, the world watched as army tanks rolled into Istanbul and military planes flew low over the capital, Ankara. One soldier was filmed shouting to civilians "It's a coup, go home!" The tanks opened fire near the Turkish parliament building. In a statement released on Turkish television, men claiming to represent the military said the army had taken control of the country.

That night, Turkish President Recep Erdogan addressed the nation via FaceTime, telling Turks the coup had failed and that his government remains in power. He called on Turks to respond to the coup by rallying in public. “I urge the Turkish people to convene at public squares and airports. There is no power higher than the power of the people,” he said.

Large crowds gathered in opposition to the armed forces. Videos of civilians climbing tanks, disarming soldiers and beating them quickly went viral around the globe. After a night of violence, the soldiers eventually surrendered.

On Saturday, a furious Erdogan arrived at Istanbul's Ataturk Airport and declared that the coup had been defeated. Many fear for the future of civil liberties in Turkey — already hugely limited under Erdogan's rule — as the president vows a post-coup crackdown. Erdogan has hinted that the death penalty may be brought back to Turkey. Up to 6,000 people have already been detained and the Turkish media reported that 2,745 judges have been removed from duty.

Moscow Calling

Turkey has long been a favorite destination for Russian tourists. Since the weekend's dramatic events, Russian airline Aeroflot has been sending empty planes to bring thousands of Russian citizens home.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Erdogan have only recently mended their friendship following a six-month freeze in relations between the two countries. The Kremlin said the two leaders had spoken about the coup on Putin's initiative and that the pair plan to meet soon. Putin's press secretary Dmitry Peskov said the meeting could take place this month.

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