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# Thousands Take to Moscow Streets, Hundreds Detained

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Hundreds were arrested across Russia Monday in nationwide "anti-corruption" demonstrations organized by the opposition leader Alexei Navalny. The protests coincided with “Russia Day,” a national holiday.

Several thousand attended the Moscow rally despite the fact that it was an unsanctioned demonstration. Navalny changed the location a day before the rally, asking supporters to take to the central Tverskaya Street instead of Prospekt Sakharova, which is on the outskirts of the city center. According to Navalny, authorities had withdrawn permission to install sound equipment at the Prospekt Sakharova location.

The unofficial presidential candidate was detained as he headed out of his house to the rally.

Dozens were arrested already within the first hour of the rally. Detentions were usually accompanied by cries of “Shame! Shame!”

According to the police watchdog NGO OVD-Info, at least 600 were arrested in the Moscow protests alone.

A reporter for The Moscow Times witnessed several detentions, including that of prominent opposition activist Ilya Yashin, who was dragged off into a police van. Another protester we removed by police for waving a sheet of paper that looked like a protest banner.

An hour after the rally started, police started separating the crowd into groups and then isolating them from each other — a tactic known as "kettling." Several journalists ended up inside these “kettles.”

Detentions increased as police pushed back on the crowd.

“They were pushing so hard that I thought they could break my neighbor’s bones”, Anna, 23, said after the rally. “Many were crying, people were hysterical.”

Navalny said the police action would be unlawful.

“We have our constitutional right to gather peacefully with political demands", Navalny told his supporters on his YouTube channel the day before.

The rally started at 2 PM. By 4 PM, Tverskaya Street was largely cleared of demonstrators.

**Embed:**

> Being inside a police kettle is not much fun. One "spaceman" pushed me really hard - I wasn't even standing in his way. pic.twitter.com/cfCJyf7jZ0
>
> — Alexey Kovalev (@Alexey___Kovalev) June 12, 2017

“I was here not because of Navalny, but because I wanted to show that I care about the future of my country. And [the authorities] ruined my day completely,” Pavel, in his twenties, told The Moscow Times.

As with the previous demonstration organized in March, Navalny’s call to come out on the streets seemed to enthuse youngsters disproportionately. Russia’s protest base has grown younger compared to Bolotnaya protests of 2011-2012.

Navalny’s bases his popular appeal on an anti-corruption platform. His investigation of Prime

Minister Dmitry Medvedev's alleged corrupt activity has already received tens of millions of hits on Youtube and has defined him as Russia's strongest and most influential opposition leader.

Speaking after the rally, former liberal politician and political commentator Leonid Gozman told The Moscow Times that he believed the Kremlin had already "lost the battle."

"They can't rule without people," he said. "And they don't have them anymore".

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