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Moscow Pokemon Go Players Detained in Anti-Revolution Raids

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Muscovites playing the virtual reality Pokémon Go game, who were swept up in mass detentions on the eve of the 1917 October Revolution centenary, face charges of violating public assembly laws.

Moscow police said it detained at least 376 people in the Russian capital on Sunday, the day that an exiled opposition politician had called for an anti-government uprising ahead of the 100-year anniversary of the Bolshevik uprising.

A Pokémon Go player who gathered with other gamers in central Moscow told the news website TJournal that the group of 18 was apprehended and charged after spending almost all day in pretrial detention.

"We showed them that we're all really trying to catch Pokémons. Police asked us why we all gathered together. One of us answered. 'Try catching it on your own,'" the player recalled on

Monday.

The players now face Nov. 15-17 court hearings on charges of violating public assembly rules, which carry a fine of up to 20,000 rubles ($340).

"This was my first contact with police, I'm shocked," recounted the player, a 24-year-old presidential academy history studies graduate named Polina. "No one explains anything, no one cares. Everyone says they don't know anything."

Members of an annual socio-political forum, who said they had stepped outside for lunch, were also swept up in the Nov. 5 detentions.

Related article: How Pokemon Go Led a Russian Blogger to Prison

Vyacheslav Maltsev, an exiled opposition politician from Saratov and ultra-nationalist videoblogger, called on his supporters to take to the streets on Nov. 5 for an anti-government revolt.

Since 2013, Maltsev has predicted that a general uprising against the current government would occur ahead of the 100th anniversary of the 1917 October Revolution, on Nov. 7.

He fled to France in June after being arrested and charged with extremism. His opposition movement based on his popular YouTube channel Artpodgotovka (Russian for "artillery preparation") was ruled an extremist organization last month.

The channel has been blocked for Russia-based users since Nov. 5.

On Tuesday, state-run television channel REN TV published footage of the FSB raiding what is said were Artpodgotovka members' apartments ahead of the unsanctioned rallies.

The FSB said it seized Molotov cocktails in the Nov. 3 raids, claiming that Maltsev's supporters planned to use them to carry out arson attacks against police and government buildings during the protests.

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