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Russian Police Detain Communist Lawmaker Over Pension Protest

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Screenshot of a YouTube video showing Nikolai Bondarenko being questioned by police.

Police in southern Russia have reportedly apprehended a regional deputy for organizing protests against government plans to raise the retirement age.

Thousands took to the streets across Russia in recent weeks to oppose legislation that will raise the pension age, including at a Communist Party-led rally held in the Saratov region on Sept. 22. Despite rarely opposing government initiatives, the party has become a vocal opponent of the pension reform that the Kremlin says is necessary to relieve pressure on the budget.

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Regional deputy Nikolai Bondarenko was detained after leading hundreds of supporters shouting anti-government slogans toward the Saratov administration building after the

demonstration, the Znak news website reported.

“Can you carry me out for a pretty picture?” Bondarenko was heard saying while getting detained on Monday in a video published on the Saratov Communist Party’s website.

Embed:

The party said several single-person pickets have been held in support of Bondarenko.

A judge fined Bondarenko 25,000 rubles ($384), according to the FreeNews-Volga news site. The deputy said he plans to appeal the fine.

Earlier in the summer, Bondarenko said police had informed him that someone had filed an extremist complaint against him for criticizing the retirement age plans.

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