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Russian Police Detain Crimean Tatar Protesters Outside Supreme Court

By Reuters

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Russian police on Thursday detained over 40 Crimean Tatars who were protesting outside the Supreme Court in Moscow over what they said was the wrongful conviction of four compatriots on terrorism-related charges, a monitoring group said.

OVD-Info, the monitor, said in a statement that police had detained 44 Crimean Tatars who had gathered outside the court with placards while an appeal in the case went on inside.

Related article: Crimean Tatar Protesters Detained on Moscow's Red Square

The incident came a day after police detained seven Crimean Tatars on Moscow's Red Square after dispersing a similar demonstration aimed at drawing attention to alleged rights abuses on the Black Sea peninsula which Russia annexed from Ukraine five years ago.

The Tatars, a mainly Muslim community that makes up about 15 percent of Crimea's population, have largely opposed Russian rule and say the 2014 annexation was illegal, a view supported by the West as well as Ukraine.

Moscow suspended the Crimean Tatars' semi-official Mejlis legislature after taking control and later jailed some Crimean Tatars it believed were extremists and members of banned Islamic group Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Russia says it is acting purely to prevent acts of terrorism, but some Crimean Tatars say the authorities are using religious extremism as a trumped-up pretext to lock up people they deem to be ideological opponents.

Thursday's protests related to a case in which four Crimean Tatars were handed long prison sentences on terrorism charges which they denied.

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