

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

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Peter Kovalev / TASS

Coronavirus update

Russia has taken a number of measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, which has killed 361 people worldwide, including evacuating its citizens from China with military planes.

Moscow suspended visa-free travel for tourists to and from China and temporarily stopped accepting and issuing documents for work visas to Chinese nationals. State-run Russian Railways said it would halt passenger trains to China, including the Beijing-Moscow route, until further notice.

Meanwhile, one of the two Chinese citizens who were diagnosed with the coronavirus in Russia has [said he learned](#) about his diagnosis from media reports.

Constitutional protests

At least 10 protesters rallying against President Vladimir Putin's proposed constitutional

changes were [detained](#) in Russia's second-largest city of St. Petersburg.

Protests against Putin's constitutional reforms have also been [held](#) without any known arrests in other cities including Russia's fourth-largest city of Yekaterinburg, while an authorized rally in Moscow was [called off](#).

Mideast doubt

U.S. President Donald Trump's Middle East peace plan contravenes several United Nations resolutions, Russian news agencies cited the Kremlin's spokesman as saying, questioning the plan's feasibility.

"We see the reaction from the Palestinians, we see the reaction of a wide range of Arab states which have sided with the Palestinians in rejecting the plan. This, obviously, makes one think about its feasibility," Dmitry Peskov was quoted as saying.

The Palestinian Authority has cut all ties with the United States and Israel, including those relating to security, after rejecting the Middle East peace plan put forward by Trump.

Standby for oil

U.S. energy producers are ready to supply Belarus with oil at competitive prices, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said at a meeting with Belarus Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei.

Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko has said he held talks with the United States and other countries to find alternative oil supplies. Moscow suspended supplies to refineries in Belarus from Jan. 1, though it partially restored them on Jan. 4.

Syrian roadblock

U.S. troops have blocked Russian convoys from touring near the Iraqi border in northeast Syria amid increasing confrontation in the oil-rich, predominantly Kurdish region, the Voice of America broadcaster [reported](#).

"Verbal altercations took place between both forces and evolved into raising weapons," the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group [said](#) of a similar standoff in the area earlier last week. It noted that Kurdish forces stepped in as mediators between Russian and U.S. troops.

Climate change

Moscow experienced its [hottest](#) January on record, Russia's weather service told AFP.

The warm weather across Russia has led to gas giant Gazprom producing its [lowest amount of natural gas](#) since 2016, according to Interfax.

Includes reporting from Reuters.

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