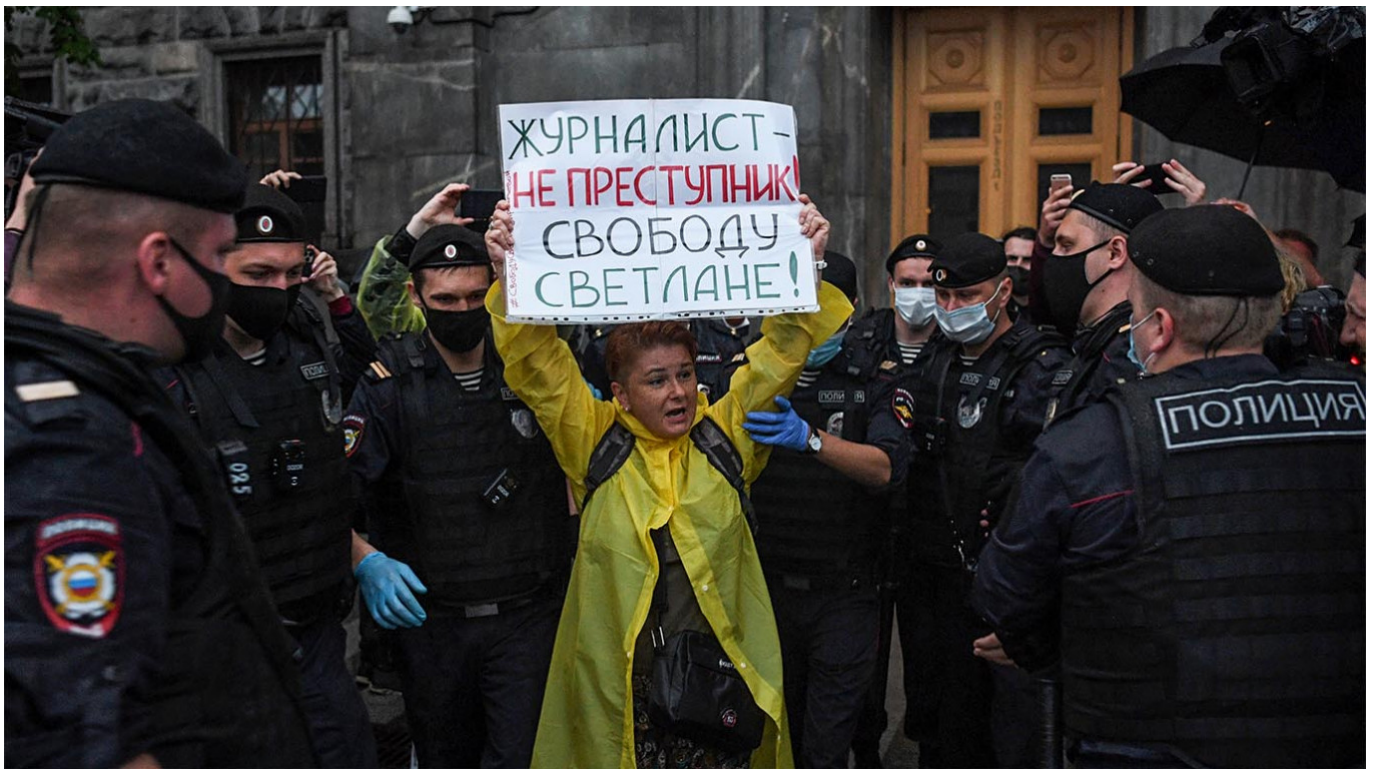


News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

July 06, 2020



A picket in support of journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva. **Kirill Kudryavtsev / AFP**

Chechen hit

Austrian police arrested two Russians from Chechnya over the fatal shooting of a Chechen dissident and asylum seeker, fueling concerns over the security of Chechen government critics living in exile.

The vocal critic of the Chechen republic's government — identified by Russian media as Mamikhan Umarov, 43, now using the name Martin Beck — was found dead with gunshot wounds near the capital Vienna on Saturday.

The Novaya Gazeta independent newspaper wrote that the murdered man was a "personal foe" of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, and his Chechen-language blog was popular because of the "outspokenness of its author."

Half-year heat

The first six months of 2020 have been the hottest on record in Russia, the head of Russia's weather service Roman Vilfand has [said](#).

Temperatures hit record highs in Moscow, St. Petersburg and vast parts of Siberia between January and June this year, Vilfand told the RBC news website.

Journalist solidarity

At least 17 people were [detained](#) for several hours in Moscow while holding pickets in support of journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva, who faces six years in prison for allegedly justifying terrorism in an opinion piece. A verdict in her case is expected Monday.

More than 30 independent journalists have also published [statements](#) in solidarity with Prokopyeva, arguing that the Pskov-based RFE/RL's Russian Service freelance contributor is being persecuted for doing her job.

Haggling over Hagia

The Russian Orthodox Church said it believes Turkey's proposal to convert Istanbul's Hagia Sophia museum into a mosque is reverting to the "Middle Ages."

"We believe that in the current conditions this act is an unacceptable violation of religious freedom," Metropolitan Hilarion, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, was [quoted](#) as saying.

A Turkish court is expected to announce its verdict in the case of restoring the UNESCO World Heritage Site's mosque status later in July.

Premier winner

Zenit St. Petersburg were crowned Russian Premier League champions for a second successive season after a 4-2 win at Kuban Krasnodar on Sunday.

With an unassailable 13-point lead over second-placed Lokomotiv Moscow and four rounds to go, Zenit can add to their trophy haul with a Russian Cup semi-final against Spartak Moscow scheduled for July 18.

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

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