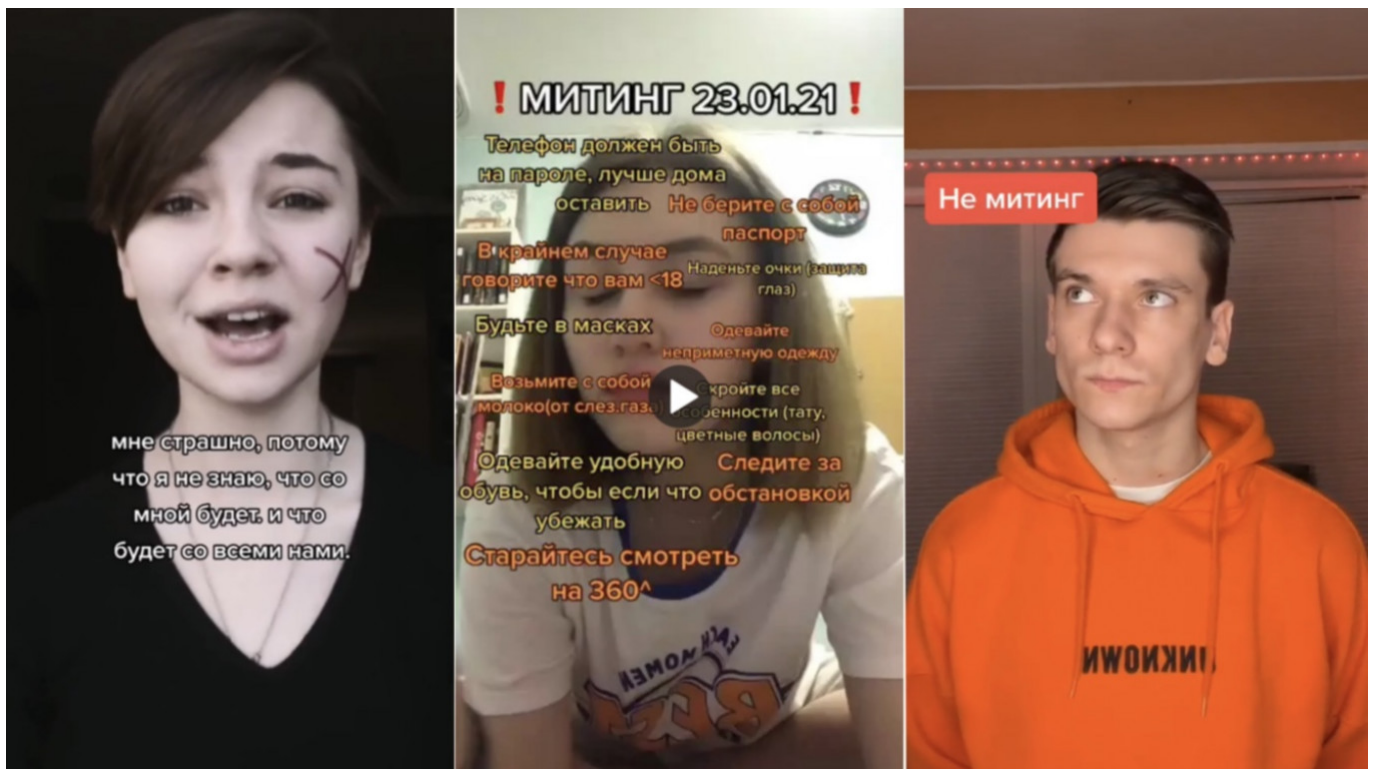


Young Russians Flood TikTok With Navalny Protest Cries

January 21, 2021



Russia's media watchdog has asked TikTok to block the videos which have racked up more than 50 million combined views. **TikTok**

Young Russians have flooded TikTok with calls to rally in support of opposition leader Alexei Navalny this weekend, prompting the state censor to urge the popular short-video app's administrators to take them down.

Navalny called for nationwide street protests this Saturday after his arrest and a viral investigative [video](#) into an opulent \$1.35 billion Black Sea estate that he and news outlets claim belongs to President Vladimir Putin. The activist was jailed this week after a defiant return to Russia from Germany, where he had been hospitalized with what Western scientists determined to be nerve agent poisoning.

Related article: [Navalny Targets 'Billion-Dollar Putin Palace' in New Investigation](#)

Russian TikTok users filmed themselves dressing up and [packing](#) for the upcoming rallies,

with many expressing readiness for the authorities to detain them. Others [took down](#) Putin's portrait from the walls of their classrooms and school hallways and replaced it with Navalny's photo.

Videos posted with the hashtags "Free Navalny" and "Jan. 23" have garnered more than 50 million combined views.

Federal media and IT watchdog Roskomnadzor has [asked](#) TikTok to block the videos, warning that inciting minors to attend unauthorized rallies is [illegal](#) under Russian law.

Roskomnadzor also appealed to other social networks and websites, most notably Russia's popular Facebook rival VKontakte, "to prevent the dissemination of illegal information involving calls for minors to participate in illegal rallies."

Other TikTok users wearing law enforcement uniforms urged against attending Navalny's rallies, [warning](#) that protesters "might get accidentally killed." School, university and even kindergarten administrators were reported to warn children and parents to avoid the upcoming rallies.

TikTok itself was Russia's most [popular](#) iPhone app in 2020, according to the research company AppFollow.

Navalny's allies and opposition-leaning media [reported](#) seeing a suspicious surge in Instagram followers after the "Putin Palace" video's release, and predicted a bot attack to block their accounts. News outlets also reported increased police check-ups on local opposition members across the country.

Meanwhile, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin announced early Thursday that all colleges, after-school workshops and children's clubs will resume in-person attendance on the eve of Navalny's protests.

Sobyanin lifted the coronavirus restrictions on young Muscovites while keeping in place work-from-home and shelter-in-place measures for adults and the elderly.

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