The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

As It Happened: Tens of Thousands Rally for Navalny's Release Across Russia

January 23, 2021



Thousands of protesters rally in central Moscow. **Sergei Bobylev / TASS**

Russians nationwide are taking to the streets of at least 85 cities in support of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who was jailed this week upon his defiant return to Russia.

Navalny, who had been recovering in Germany from what Western scientists determined to be poisoning by the Soviet-era nerve agent Novichok, asked his supporters to protest against his jailing — and against Russia's ruling elite as a whole. Saturday's events are set to test the strength of his support at home after his poisoning sparked Western sanctions and condemnation against Moscow.

Russian authorities sent out strong warnings against attending the protests, which have not received required government authorization. Several of Navalny's allies were jailed or fined ahead of Saturday's events, while Russia's state media watchdog ordered social media posts promoting the rallies to be taken down.

Police detained 3,711 people in over 900 cities and towns nationwide, with 1,455 detentions in

Moscow alone, according to independent police monitor OVD-Info.

Here's a live look at the news as it happened:

7:49 p.m.: Protesters arrive at Matrosskaya Tishina, the high-security jail where Navalny is being held. Video from the scene shows a heavy police crackdown with detentions.

Embed:

> ⊠⊠Полиция бьет ногами и дубинками протестующих у Матросской тишины
>
> Видео: «Медиазона» pic.twitter.com/Zn8hysUuDu
>
> — Медиазона (@mediazzzona) January 23, 2021

7:15 p.m.: Navalny aide Leonid Volkov says the team plans to organize more protests next weekend.

6:53 p.m.: Video shows a St. Petersburg riot police officer kicking a woman in the stomach and knocking her onto the pavement after she asks "Why are you arresting him?" Reports say the woman is taken away in an ambulance.

Embed:

> В Петербурге на Площади восстания ОМОНовец очень сильно ударил женщину ногой после того, как она задала вопрос о задержанииhttps://t.co/50drP9qjlr
>
> Видео: @Fontanka_spb pic.twitter.com/DSPuJDcSDH
>
> — Медиазона (@mediazzzona) January 23, 2021

6:45 p.m.: Some Moscow protesters start marching toward the jail where Navalny is being held, reports say.

6:33 p.m.: Yulia Navalnaya has been released from detention, the MBKh Media news website reports.

6:22 p.m.: Protesters in Moscow attacked a car appearing to belong to the security services, video footage showed. The car's driver has been hospitalized with a gouged eye, according to the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

Meanwhile, video posted to social media shows unarmed, peaceful protesters being beaten and detained by riot police.

5:59 p.m.: About 40 police officers have been injured in Saturday's protests, the state-run RIA and TASS news agencies report.

5:40 p.m.: Roman Anin, editor-in-chief of the iStories news outlet, was detained and later released, the outlet tweeted.

5:33 p.m.: Russia has accused the U.S. Embassy in Moscow of publishing routes of planned demonstrations in support of Navalny and demanded an explanation from American diplomats.

5:23 p.m.: Protesters continue to march through the streets of central Moscow, with police detaining people at random, according to reports on social media. Video footage shows protesters throwing snowballs at officers.

Embed:

> У цирка на Трубной полицейских забросали снежками, те явно растерялись
>
> Видео: Юля Сугуева / Медиазона pic.twitter.com/QRkpJygSfN
>
> — Медиазона (@mediazzzona) January 23, 2021

4:54 p.m.: At least four journalists have been hurt during the Moscow protests, the Ekho Moskvy radio station reports.

4:45 p.m.: Small protests in Russia's western exclave of Kaliningrad have started.

4:37 p.m.: A Reuters estimate places the number of protesters in Moscow at 40,000. White Counter, an NGO that counts participants at rallies, later estimates that 20,000 people attended. Confrontations continue to break out between protesters and police.

4:27 p.m.: Police have cleared Moscow's Pushkin Square, reports say. Protesters have spread out into nearby side streets in the city center.

4:21 p.m.: As many as 10,000 people have taken to the streets in Nizhny Novgorod, Novaya Gazeta reports.

Embed:

> А вот как силовики зачищали Пушкинскую площадь — в ход пошли дубинки pic.twitter.com/vFBfi3d7wD

— Дождь (@tvrain) January 23, 2021

4:03 p.m.: Scattered clashes between riot police and protesters are breaking out in Moscow, the VTimes news website and other outlets report.

3:55 p.m.: Protesters in St. Petersburg have broken through the police line as they march down Nevsky Prospekt, according to video footage published by local media.

3:26 p.m.: Yulia Navalnaya says she has been detained, posting a photo of herself inside a police wagon.

Embed:

> А вот как люди прошли через первое заграждение на канале Грибоедова. Видео: Раньше всех pic.twitter.com/eqbNccXkSq
>
> — «Бумага» (@paperpaper_ru) January 23, 2021

3:10 p.m.: Moscow protesters have begun marching from Pushkin Square to Manezh Square next to the Kremlin, according to The Moscow Times' correspondent at the scene. Protesters chant slogans including "Freedom," "Resign," "Putin is a thief," "Release him" and "One for all and all for one."

3:05 p.m.: Police in in Russia's second city of St. Petersburg have begun detaining protesters at the rally near St. Isaac's Cathedral, the local Fontanka.ru news website reported. Hundreds take to the streets in the city of Nizhny Novgorod some 420 kilometers east of Moscow.

3:00 p.m.: Navalny's wife, Yulia Navalnaya, has arrived at the Moscow protest.

2:55 p.m.: Several thousand protesters have arrived at Pushkin Square in Moscow, AFP reported. Some protesters are carrying toilet brushes — or signs depicting them — in reference to the 62,000 ruble ($823) toilet brush shown in Navalny's video investigation into President Vladimir Putin's alleged palace.

2:24 p.m.: Several thousand people attend the protest in the southern city of Krasnodar.

2:09 p.m.: Protesters continue to arrive at Moscow's Pushkin Square while a loudspeaker orders people to leave the unauthorized demonstration.

2:05 p.m.: Navalny ally Lyubov Sobol has been detained in Moscow.

1:48 p.m.: Blogger Ilya Varlamov was detained in Moscow, then released.

1:48 p.m.: In Yekaterinburg, clashes have broken out between protesters and police, with officers reportedly targeted with snowballs and smoke grenades.

1:42 p.m.: At least one child is among those detained in Moscow, according to video footage. On the eve of the protests, Russian authorities had cracked down on TikTok content where young people filmed themselves preparing for the rallies, while universities and schools threatened to expel or punish students for taking part in the events.

12:28 p.m.: Riot police in central Moscow have begun breaking up groups and detaining people on Pushkin Square, where the city's protest is scheduled to start at 2 p.m. Hundreds of protesters are already in the square, according to reports. Mobile internet connectivity issues have been reported in the area.

Embed:

> На Пушкинской люди скандируют «Путин вор!»
>
> Видео: Екатерина Гробман pic.twitter.com/yzCsOAiUAQ
>
> — VTimes (@VTimesMedia) January 23, 2021

12:00 p.m.: Protests have started in Russia's fourth-largest city of Yekaterinburg — where the temperature is minus 30 degrees Celsius — as well as in Ufa, Chelyabinsk and other cities across central Russia. Estimates of the Yekaterinburg crowd range between 5,000 and 11,000.

Embed:

> Большое шествие в Екатеринбурге! pic.twitter.com/b4J0px2iXx
>
> — Команда Навального (@teamnavalny) January 23, 2021

11:50 a.m.: Oleg Stepanov, the head of Team Navalny's Moscow headquarters, has been detained from his apartment, Stepanov wrote on his Telegram channel. Protests in Moscow are scheduled to start in around two hours.

11:30 a.m.: At least 15,000 people have attended protests in Russia's Far East and Siberia so far, MBKh media reported, based on tallies gathered by their regional correspondents, while 174 people have been detained so far in 25 cities, according to police-monitoring website OVD-Info.

11:23 a.m.: Thousands of protesters filled the central square in the Siberian city of Irkutsk, video showed.

11:20 a.m.: Police in Moscow have been preparing for protests in the capital since Friday evening. Pushkin Square — the site of the rally — has been cordoned off. One person was detained there early Saturday morning while staging a one-person picket in support of

Navalny. A number of large police vehicles have been spotted parked throughout central Moscow and barricades are being prepared along the central Tverskaya shopping street and other main roads, according to various independent reports. Extra police officers have also been deployed to Red Square, the Avtozak Telegram channel reported.

11:16 a.m.: More than 3,000 people are protesting in Russia's third largest city Novosibirsk, Meduza reported. In Tomsk — the city where Alexei Navalny was visiting when he was poisoned — more than 2,000 people came out, local TV-2 reported. In Krasnoyarsk, turnout was around 1,500, Novaya Gazeta estimated.

Embed:

> The police seem to have been particularly rough against pro-Navalny protesters in Vladivostok today. A good indication of how they will be treated in Moscow, where arrests have already begun, hours before the rally starts https://t.co/KosMpqZd1i
>
> — max seddon (@maxseddon) January 23, 2021

11:04 a.m.: Protestors have started to be detained in Novosibirsk, with at least 12 people taken into custody.

11:00 a.m.: Security forces have largely cleared the streets in the Far East city of Vladivostok, where the local time is 18:00, according to the independent Novaya Gazeta news site. It reported "tough detentions," and "at least one person taken to a police van unconscious." Videos showed security forces charging towards crowds of protestors to disperse them.

Embed:

> Another video from Irkutsk.
>
> "We will not leave!" they chant.
>
> Will be tough for police to disperse this crowd without very ugly scenes. pic.twitter.com/pbWwuKNAoB
>
> — Matthew Luxmoore (@mjluxmoore) January 23, 2021

10:30 a.m.: Rallies continue across Siberia, with protests reported in Novosibirsk — Russia's third largest city — as well as Tomsk, Omsk, Ulan-Ude, Kemerovo and others.

10:00 a.m.: At least 48 protestors in 13 cities have been detained so far, according to the independent police-monitoring website OVD-Info.

9:30 a.m.: Some 300 people protested in the Siberian city of Chita. At least four people were detained, including one minor, OVD-Info reported.

9:29 a.m.: A small protest took place in the northern Siberian city of Yakutsk despite temperatures of minus 50 degrees Celsius.

Embed:

> @ioannZH shares photo of Navalny protest in Yakutia, where its -50 c pic.twitter.com/MUq0ZEkwXe
>
> — Jake Rudnitsky (@Rudnit) January 23, 2021

9:10 a.m.: About 500 people have begun protesting in the Siberian city of Irkutsk, MBKh news reported.

8:20 a.m.: In the Far East city of Khabarovsk, about a dozen protesters have been detained and later lined up against a wall and beaten while in police custody, according to independent police-monitoring website OVD-Info.

8:19 a.m.: Up to 2,000 people protest in the Far East capital of Vladivostok, the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper reports. Police dispersed protesters with force, according to video footage.

This story is being updated.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/01/23/as-it-happened-tens-of-thousands-rally-for-navalnys-release-across-russia-a72705